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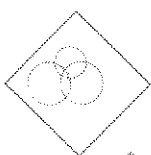
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### Austerity versus Stimulus: International Challenges for Social Welfare

*Special Issue Editors:*

Howard Karger, Professor and Head of the School of  
Social Work and Human Services, The University of  
Queensland, Australia.

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of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley

*Theme:*

The austerity measures being forced upon smaller highly indebted European Union (EU) member nations by the larger and wealthier ones, is causing great hardship for the populations of Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain and other highly leveraged countries. Even larger economies like the UK are being impacted by deep budget cuts in virtually all areas of the public sector. This strategy is a direct repudiation of stimulus-based Keynesian principles that have been the accepted hallmark for nudging economies out of recessionary states. The replacement of Keynesian-based spending approaches by severe austerity measures is leading to widespread suffering by large swaths of Europeans, as well as developing nations that rely on exports to Europe. Even non-European countries like the U.S., Canada and Australia, are also feeling the pinch as the financial and capital crisis reverberates throughout the world.

This special issue will focus on how the current economic crisis is affecting social policy and social welfare systems in various European nations, as well as the U.S. and non-European developing nations.

Topics of interest include:

- the impact of austerity policies on the social welfare system in the European Union, with a special focus on the more troubled economies like Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain
- the impact of austerity policies on Nordic countries, such as Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland
- the impact of the ongoing recession on the U.S. welfare state, with specific emphasis on the termination of the federal stimulus package and deficit-driven state budgets. Comparison of the Democratic and Republican approaches to the problems and choices.
- the austerity-driven changes to the social welfare states in larger European Union countries like the UK, Germany and France.
- the impact of the global financial crisis in key developing countries such as China and India, and on regional economies in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. How have one or more of these countries responded to the global crisis?
- the historical perspective: Where have austerity measures historically been implemented and where have they failed or succeeded?

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Final manuscripts should not exceed 5,000 words, excluding the references. All articles must comply with the citation and format requirements of the *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*.

Please feel free to direct inquiries to Howard Karger at [H.Karger@uq.edu.au](mailto:H.Karger@uq.edu.au) or James Midgley at [midg@berkeley.edu](mailto:midg@berkeley.edu).

Abstracts and one-page outlines should be submitted to Howard Karger at [H.Karger@uq.edu.au](mailto:H.Karger@uq.edu.au).

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# Dating Violence Policy: Making the Grade

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*Dating violence rates affect an unacceptably high percentage of youth. This paper tests a model to understand the considerable variation in state dating violence policy comprehensiveness. Independent variables in the model are state political culture, partisan control of political institutions, prevalence of dating violence, and median household income. Bivariate results show partial support for preliminary hypotheses. Regression analysis indicates that strength of Democratic Party control of governmental institutions is the only variable in the model that achieved statistical significance. Implications and recommendations for future research are provided.*

*Key words: dating violence, social policy, political culture, political party influence in policy-making*

Dating violence among adolescents is a serious public health concern that occurs across all social, economic, cultural, and ethnic groups (Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2001). Some studies suggest that up to 40 percent of high school students have had experiences with dating violence (Hickman, Jaycox, & Aronoff, 2004). The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) survey reported that, in the United States, about 10 percent of high school students experience physical abuse such as being slapped, hit, or physically hurt on purpose by

their boyfriend or girlfriend (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2008). Dating violence affects teens' physical and psychological development and well-being (Callahan, Tolman, & Saunders, 2003), and threatens the stability of communities (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, & Kleinman, 1995; Fischbach & Herbert, 1997; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). Strong correlations exist between youth being victimized by physical dating violence and higher levels of depression, and poorer educational outcomes (Banyard & Cross, 2008; Filson, Ulloa, Runfola, & Hokoda, 2010); such youth are also more likely to engage in risky behaviors, including episodic heavy drinking, sexual intercourse, attempted suicide, pregnancy, smoking and physical fighting, than non-victimized youth (CDC, 2006).

Studies on teen dating violence often concentrate on the impact of victimization, help-seeking, risk and protective factors, and the evaluation of prevention efforts or interventions. Few studies (Campbell, 2005; Largio, 2007) have focused on policy issues related to dating violence, and we know little about what influences the content of dating violence policies. Examination of the factors associated with more comprehensive dating violence policies across the United States may help us better understand how to promote policies to address the alarming rates of adolescent dating violence. In this study, we examine the influence of a number of variables on the comprehensiveness of states' dating violence policies.

All fifty states in the USA have some form of domestic violence civil protection order legislation. Legal policies to address adolescent dating violence are often embedded in those domestic violence policies (Sousa, 1999). Dating violence policies vary dramatically from state to state (Break the Cycle, 2010).

States developing adolescent dating violence policies face significant challenges. The definition of dating violence is challenging in itself. There are few definitions of what constitutes a dating relationship. For example, adolescent dating relationships are often brief, so youth differ in their conceptions of dating. Teens also use different words for dating relationships, and the words describing dating partners change frequently and vary in different parts of the country (Pittman, Wolfe, & Wekerle, 2000). Definitions of violence are difficult to

capture. Adolescents may form different opinions and judgments about violent incidents based on the context of the situation. Culture also plays a vital role in adolescents' perceptions of what constitutes violent incidents (Lee, Takaku, Ottati, & Yan, 2004). Another challenge to developing dating violence policies is the use of specific language and terms (i.e., dating violence) so teens understand that these policies exist to help them (Largio, 2007).

None of the foregoing research addresses the determinants of dating violence policy, specifically, or of intimate partner violence policy more generally. Given these differences in policies between states and the lack of prior research to explore the topic, it is natural to wonder what relates to the variation between states on this policy issue. In this study, we examine the comprehensiveness of each state's dating violence policies, and relate the policies to the prevalence of dating violence and other policy-relevant variables.

### Theoretical Framework

Our theoretical framework examines factors internal to the particular state, a common strategy for comparative state policy research (Matisoff, 2008; Wiener & Koontz, 2010). According to Weiner and Koontz (2010), the internal determinants approach studies characteristics of states that occur within those states' borders. Typical factors include problem severity, social and cultural history, economic conditions, and political party strength. While these variables have been tested in many different policy arenas, only a few are used in any one study. As there appears to be no extant research on the determinants of dating violence prevention policy particularly, we look at four variables that are internal to the state in this research: political culture, partisan control of government institutions, problem prevalence, and state socio-economic level.

#### *Political Culture*

A state's political culture refers to its inhabitants' orientations toward key objects of the political system and toward the individual's role in that political system (Almond & Verba, 1965; Silver & Dowley, 2000). Political culture consists of political views, characteristics, and the core values which are shared

by individuals within a society, and it influences the social and legal policies of a society (Fisher & Pratt, 2006; Mead, 2004; Shock, 2008).

Elazar's (1972) theory describes three subcultures relating to the purpose and role of government in the United States: moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic. The core value of moralistic political culture is the concept of "commonwealth," which is that citizens have an obligation to participate in government. It stresses the commitment to communal power and believes in government intervention into any activities considered antithetical to the public interest (Elazar, 1972). States with a predominantly moralistic political culture are likely to have a higher level of political liberalism, with less political corruption and more progressive political attitudes (Elazar, 1972).

The individualistic political culture is characterized by private entrepreneurship and conservative values. Individualistic political culture considers politics as a specialized activity for professionals, with the expectation of limited participation by the general public (Elazar, 1972). States with individualistic political culture tend to embrace limited government intervention into private activities.

Traditionalistic culture upholds the paternalistic and elitist values that encourage a hierarchical society. It accepts government's positive role for the community and welfare of its citizens. However, the traditionalistic political culture emphasizes securing and maintaining the existing social order, which includes male dominance in the family and workplace (Elazar, 1972). Participation of citizens in politics is expected to remain within society's elites.

State political culture has been found to be a significant determinant of policies relating to the death penalty (Fisher & Pratt, 2006), the stringency of voter identification laws (Hale & McNeal, 2010), educational policy (Louis, Thomas, Gordon, & Febey, 2008), the implementation of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (Mead, 2004), and the agenda-setting impact of newspaper coverage (Tan & Weaver, 2009).

*Partisan control of governmental institutions.* The term "governmental institutions" in this study refers to the political governing bodies in the states, i.e., the legislative assemblies

and the governorships. Partisan control of these governmental institutions shapes the policies that emerge from the give and take of lawmaking. The Republican and the Democratic Parties are associated with conservative and liberal values, respectively. In recent decades, the Democratic Party has been linked with liberalism and progressiveness and the willingness to use government policy to decrease the severity of social problems (such as dating violence) (Fowler, 2004). On the other hand, the Republican Party has been more connected with laissez-faire policies, fiscal conservatism, and the promotion of personal responsibility (Fowler, 2004). Thus, we believe that political party of legislators and governors will influence the enactment of dating violence policies.

#### *Dating Violence Prevalence and Economic Resources*

We believe that the level of dating violence in a state impacts the likelihood that there will be action taken regarding the problem. Jones and Baumgartner (2005) show how publicity regarding a problem increases the chances of legislation in many different policy areas. While it may take only a single horrific example to push an idea into law, it is also possible that a continuing series of years of problems lead government officials to act (Kingdon, 2002). We thus believe that legislation is more likely in states where the problem is greater. States with a higher level of economic resources in terms of average income per household are believed to be more likely to invest in legislative action to solve social problems (Brunner, Ross & Washington, 2011).

The following hypotheses were tested: (1) Political culture of the states will be associated with the comprehensiveness of the states' dating violence policy, such that moralistic political culture will have the highest grade, followed by individualistic and then the traditionalistic cultures; (2) Greater Democratic Party control of the governmental institutions in a state (governorship, Senate, and, state House of Representatives) will be positively associated with the comprehensiveness of the states' dating violence policy; (3) The greater the prevalence of dating violence at the time of enactment, the greater the level of comprehensiveness of dating violence policy will be; and (4) The higher the state's median household income, the more comprehensive the policy will be.

## Methods

All of the states of the USA were considered for inclusion. While the District of Columbia is treated as a state in some comparative state policy research, it was excluded in this project as it does not have the political culture variable. Nebraska was also eliminated as it has a nonpartisan, unicameral state legislature (Council of State Governments, 2010). Montana and Alaska were omitted due to having a non-partisan state legislature during the time studied.

### *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable in our study is the grades of dating violence policies given to all states by the nationally regarded advocacy group 'Break the Cycle' (2010). The grades published in 2010 are based on the comprehensiveness of dating violence laws in effect in December, 2009. We briefly describe how this group developed a grade for each state. A higher grade is related to greater ease in obtaining a civil domestic violence protection order for a teen, and a broader range of grounds for granting such protective orders (Break the Cycle, 2010).

The level of difficulty in accessing civil protection orders (CPO) for teens was based on 10 indicators related to the recommended policy criteria advocated by the experts on dating violence at Break the Cycle (Break the Cycle, 2010). The experts in dating violence scored and weighted the following indicators: (1) minors can be granted CPOs; (2) dating relationships recognized for CPO acquisition; (3) minors can file for CPO on own behalf (10%); (4) parental notification requirement; (5) same sex couples qualify for CPOs; (6) CPO granted against a minor respondent; (7) other options available if minor cannot file for CPO; (8) qualifying definitions of abuse for filing CPO; (9) minor's request for CPO heard in courts familiar with domestic violence; and (10) modifiability of the CPO (Break the Cycle, 2010). According to Break the Cycle (2010),

States that met the criterion received ten points for the indicator and those with the most adverse policy received zero points. Intermediate policies were assigned point values between 0 and 10. States earning

at least eight points received an A, states earning at least 7 points received a B, those earning at least 6 points received a C, and those earning at least 5 points received a D. However, states that did not permit minors to obtain a CPO or permit dating relationships to qualify for a CPO received automatic failing grades. (p. 5)

Break the Cycle (2010) rated dating violence policy comprehensiveness for all 50 states. Grades of the states' policies were originally coded with a letter grade, A (most comprehensive) to F (most limited). We coded the policy grade in similar fashion, and treat it as a continuous variable with five values: A = 5, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2, and F = 1.

#### *Independent Variables*

The independent variables in this study are: (1) political culture, (2) partisan control of governmental institutions, (3) dating violence prevalence; and (4) median household income of the state. This section describes each variable.

*Political culture.* Based on the Elazar's (1972) theory of states' political culture, we used Johnston's (1983) classification scheme to classify all 50 states into three broad groups. All states were coded according to their dominant political culture. We have operationalized political culture as a categorical variable where 1 represents the traditionalistic political culture, 2 represents the individualistic political culture and 3 represents the moralistic political culture.

*Partisan control of governmental institutions.* We originally developed three variables to represent the state's level of partisan control of the governmental institutions: party majority in the state Senate, party majority in the House of Representatives, and party affiliation of the governor at the time of enactment of the most recent dating violence policy. We then created a composite variable to use in our hypothesis testing. We assigned the value of 1 if the chamber's majority or governor's affiliation was Republican and 2 if it was Democratic for each of the three institutions. We summed these three scores so that the final variable ranged from 3 (total Republican control of the governmental institutions) to 6 (total Democratic control of the governmental institutions in that state). In the two cases

where there was a bipartisan coalition in the legislatures or non-partisan governor, the case was dropped, as the objective of this study is to understand the impact of partisan control of governmental bodies on dating violence policy.

*Dating violence.* Data on dating violence prevalence were collected from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS), conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2006, 2008). YRBS is a voluntary school-based biennial survey that uses a nationally representative sample of students attending ninth to twelfth grades in public and private schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia (CDC, 2006). Dating violence prevalence rate is the percentage of high school students (9th - 12th grade) who experienced dating violence (being hit, slapped, injured, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend) during the 12 months preceding the survey (CDC, 2008). In our analyses, we use information collected in 2007 (CDC, 2008), because it is the year most closely preceding the year the dating violence policies were assessed for comprehensiveness, and because the data published in 2008 are the most comprehensive of the data series, with information from the most states.

*Median state income.* Information relating to state median household income in 2009 was collected from the United States Census Bureau (2011).

### *Analyses*

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the overall situation of dating violence policy grades, political culture, partisan control, dating violence prevalence, and state median income. Bivariate analyses, ANOVA and t-tests were used to examine the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The number of cases in our study is 47, although the number of states for which we have a measure of dating violence prevalence is just 34, thus decreasing the number of cases in the regression analysis testing the policy model. Because of the limited number of states, which increases the likelihood of committing a Type II error, we used an alpha level of .10 to determine statistical significance.

## Results

### *Descriptive Analysis*

*Dating violence policies.* Dating violence policies are, in general, not very comprehensive. In 2010, six (13%) of the states had an "A" grade policy and 14 (30%) states had policies with a grade of "B." The grade of "C" was awarded to 13 states (28%), while four (9%) earned a "D," and 10 states (21%) had a grade of "F."

*Political culture.* Almost half of the states ( $n = 23$ ; 49%) have a moralistic culture, 34% ( $n = 16$ ) have a traditionalistic culture and 17% ( $n = 8$ ) have an individualistic culture.

*Partisan control of governmental institutions.* In 2009, states leaned slightly towards the Democratic Party. Nine states (19%) had single-party control by Republicans and 13 states (28%) had two out of three institutions in the Republican camp. Eleven states (23%) had mostly Democratic control of institutions and 14 (30%) were controlled by Democrats exclusively.

*Prevalence.* The dating violence prevalence rate for the year 2007 (CDC, 2008) was used in this study because it was the most recent year prior to the assessment of the laws in all of the states. It thus represents the data that legislators and governors were most likely to turn to in considering whether dating violence was a problem for their states or not. Nationally, in 2007, more than one in ten high school students reported experiencing physical dating violence ( $M = 11.5\%$ ,  $SD = 2.42$ ).

*Median household income (2009).* The median household income ranged from a low of \$52,034 in New Mexico to a high of \$94,441 in New Jersey. The average median income was \$69,454 ( $SD = \$11,024$ ).

### *Bivariate Hypothesis Tests*

We earlier presented four bivariate hypotheses. This section examines the results of testing these hypotheses.

$H_1$ . We hypothesized that states with a moralistic political culture will receive the highest policy grade, followed by the individualistic culture and then the traditionalistic culture. The results lend support to the hypothesis, but are not statistically significant [ $F(2, 44) = .687$ ,  $p = .508$ ]. Moralistic states have the highest mean policy grade ( $M=3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ), followed

by individualistic states ( $M=3.00$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ) and traditionalistic states ( $M=2.75$ ,  $SD=1.48$ ).

$H_2$ . We predicted that Democratic political party control of the governmental institutions of the state (Governorship, State Senate, and, State House of Representatives) will be positively associated with a higher policy grade (showing greater policy comprehensiveness) for the state. The composite variable of partisan control creates an overall picture of unified versus divided government. Using the variable relating to overall partisan control, the correlation of policy grade (greater levels of comprehensiveness) and partisan control (more Democratic control) shows a positive correlation of .465 ( $p = .001$ ), showing a strong linkage between these two variables.

$H_3$ . In our third hypothesis, we predicted a positive correlation between the prevalence of dating violence (2007) and the grade of the dating violence policy of the state (2010). States with a grade of A ( $n = 4$ ) had an average prevalence of 10.00 percent. States with a B grade ( $n = 11$ ) had a prevalence of 11.25 and those with a grade of C ( $n = 11$ ) had a slightly higher victimization rate of 11.83. Policy at the D level ( $n = 2$ ) was associated with a prevalence rate of only 8.75 percent, far below that of even the A states. States with a grade of F ( $n = 7$ ) did have the highest prevalence rate, at 13.00 percent. These results, however, do not reach the level of statistical significance [ $F(4, 30) = 1.982$ ,  $p = .123$ ].

$H_4$ . We hypothesized that the higher the state's median household income, the higher the policy grade would be. States with a grade of F have a median household income of \$64,565, those with a D have a median household income of \$69,740, and those with a grade of C have a median household income of \$71,095. States with a grade of B, however, only have a median household income of \$69,245, or a bit less than those at the D grade level. States with an A grade have the highest median household income, \$74,340. Despite showing a trend as we hypothesized, these results are not statistically significant [ $F(4, 42) = .849$ ,  $p = .502$ ].

In sum, we have one hypothesis (political control) that is supported using bivariate significance tests. We have two hypotheses (political culture and median state income) that are trending in the expected direction, but do not reach statistical significance. Our final hypothesis (prevalence of the problem)

has results in the opposite direction of what we hypothesized, though these results are not statistically significant.

### *Model Testing*

The bivariate analysis conducted so far indicates some, though limited, support for several of our hypotheses. Overall, results of the regression analysis to test our full model indicate results similar to the bivariate analyses. Only one of the variables impacts the dependent variable significantly: partisan control of the institutions of government by Democrats, ( $\beta = .566$ ,  $t(34) = 3.916$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), as shown in Table 1. All other variables are below the threshold for statistical significance. The model had an adjusted r-square of .331 [ $F(4, 30) = 5.201$ ,  $p = .003$ ].

Table 1: Regression Analysis Results

Independent variable	Standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ )	<i>p</i>
Political culture	.655	.517
Partisan control of the institutions of government by Democrats	.566	.000
Percentage of high school students who experienced dating violence (2007)	-.236	.120
2009 State median income	.074	.667

### Discussion

The purpose of this paper is to understand better the forces that shape the comprehensiveness of dating violence policy at the state level. We created a literature-based model to explain the grade of state dating violence policy. When tested, the results of the study found only partial support for the model. We found that Democratic partisan control of governmental institutions is a statistically significant predictor of higher policy grades. We also found that political culture followed the pattern we hypothesized (moralistic culture led to the most

comprehensive policies, traditional culture was associated with the most limited policies, and individualistic culture was correlated at an intermediate level), but not to a statistically significant level. We determined that states with higher levels of median income tend to have higher policy grades (again, however, this is not a statistically significant relationship).

One test had results that ran counter to our expectations. While we believed that a higher prevalence of dating violence would lead to higher policy grades, we found an opposite pattern to be the case (though it is not a statistically significant).

When testing the overall model, results show that the model is useful in predicting the dependent variable, though only one independent variable (Democratic partisan control of governmental institutions) is statistically significant. The strength of this one variable is impressive and underscores the importance of political party affiliation in predicting policy choices.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

There are several limitations to this study. First, the small size of the potential sample of states reduces the ability of statistical analyses to arrive at statistically significant results. This limitation was addressed by using a broader definition of significance, .10 rather than the typical .05 level. Yet, with missing data on some variables, particularly the prevalence rates of dating violence at the state level, the final  $n$  for the regression analysis is only 34 cases, much lower than we would like. This loss, one-fourth of the initial sample of 47, makes it difficult to discover any but very strong effects. The small number of cases compared to the number of variables may be the cause of low levels of significance rather than fatal flaws in the model.

Measurement concerns exist as well. The YRBS data, used to determine dating violence prevalence, were collected only from youth in school. The CDC (2008) reports that in 2005, at least 3% of youth in the 16–17 year age group were not enrolled in a high school, thus these data do not represent all persons of the age group under this study. Additionally, the YRBS relies on self-reports. The extent of youth under-reporting or over-reporting of their dating violent behaviors was not assessed in measuring prevalence. There was some variation

in data collection across states and some states did not report data on all variables. Despite its limitations, the YRBS is the most comprehensive measure we have of physical dating violence prevalence across states and so was used in this research.

### Implications and Conclusion

Despite these limitations, several results bear notice and the topic needs to be explored further. Perhaps the most eye-opening result is the generally low level of comprehensiveness of dating violence policy states have on the books. Out of 49 states, only a few had policies strong enough to earn an "A" grade in 2010 (Break the Cycle decided not to create grades in 2011, so, while laws may have changed since then, we do not have a comparable measurement of them). This fact indicates the severe limitations of most policies in protecting teenage victims, according to the criteria of Break the Cycle.

The most important policy-related implication emerges from the finding that the party in control of state governmental bodies strongly influences dating violence policies. This result supports previous studies' findings on the influence of political party on social, legal, and environmental policies (Gershtenson, Mangun, & Smith, 2004; Young, Farrell, Henderson, & Taxman, 2009). States with Democratic majorities in the legislature are shown to have more comprehensive dating violence policies, a fact that should be important in mobilizing advocates on the topic to participate actively in electoral campaigns at the state level.

Researchers interested in teen dating violence, gender and women's studies, and social policy can use this study as a springboard to conduct further research to: (1) collect and obtain more data on dating violence to know the actual prevalence rates, along with other related demographical and socio-economical indices; (2) identify other socioeconomic and political factors that influence such policies; (3) measure the impact of policies on prevalence of dating violence (and other forms of violence); and (4) explore other legal procedures or options that can be used to protect the victims of violence. Additional research is needed. Longitudinal research is needed to better understand the effect of these factors on the development and

prevalence of risky behaviors. A longitudinal study is needed to identify the direction of associations between dating violence and strength of the policy. Research is also needed to understand how dating violence policies differentially impact male and female adolescents, since we know that the dynamics and consequences of dating violence vary by gender (Banister & Schreiber, 2001; Silverman, Raj, & Clements, 2004).

While this study is merely an initial step to understanding the correlates of dating violence policy, the results indicate it is possible to better comprehend the relationship between dating violence policies and variables that influence the policies. Very few studies have addressed the role that policy variables, such as partisan control of governmental institutions, might have in impacting policy concerning dating violence among adolescents. Variables that are important in understanding the formation of other types of policies seem to be less important in shaping dating violence policy. Future research efforts are needed to provide greater understanding of how policy in this arena is formed and the impact of more comprehensive policies on the prevalence of dating violence in a state.

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# Explicating the Social Mechanisms Linking Alcohol Use Behaviors and Ecology to Child Maltreatment

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*This paper begins to describe and explicate the specific mechanisms by which alcohol use and the alcohol use environment contribute to specific types of child maltreatment. These mechanisms relating alcohol outlet densities to child maltreatment described here include effects on social disorganization, parent's drinking behaviors, and parental supervision. By investigating potential mechanisms, new information could be obtained on the importance and role of alcohol and its availability in the etiology of child maltreatment. This knowledge can be used to further tailor interventions to those conditions most likely to prevent and reduce maltreatment.*

*Key words: child maltreatment, alcohol outlet density, venue utilization, alcohol use, supervisory neglect, physical abuse*

In 2009, approximately 763,000 children were found to be victims of child maltreatment by Child Protective Services (about 10.1 per 1,000 children, U.S. DHHS, 2010), and over 400,000 children resided in foster care (U.S. DHHS, 2011). General population estimates of physical abuse and neglect suggest that the actual rates of child maltreatment are likely to be much higher (Sedlak et al., 2010; Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore, & Runyan, 1998). The vast majority of research on child physical abuse and neglect has traditionally focused on the psycho-social characteristics of parents and caretakers that lead to child maltreatment. However, a growing number

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of studies suggest that characteristics of the environment in which these families live may also affect parenting behaviors. Yet, with a few notable exceptions (see Coulton, Korbin, & Su, 1999; Molnar, Buka, Brennan, Holton, & Earls, 2003), these studies of individual or environmental characteristics occur in isolation of each other. For this paper, child maltreatment will be used interchangeably with 'child abuse and neglect' and refers to physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect as defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (Public Law, 93-247).

Currently, broad theories exist that seek to understand why individuals maltreat their children (e.g., stress and coping) while others seek to understand how the larger environment affects rates of maltreatment (e.g., social capital). An overarching framework that can encompass these and other theories is the ecological framework by Bronfenbrenner (1979) that posits multi-levels of relationships and environments influence behavior. Lacking in most of these theoretical frameworks are explicit statements or understandings of the social mechanisms at play. Here social mechanisms are defined as "frequently and easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under generally unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences" (Elster, 1998, p. 45). While large-scale theories are general enough to include explanations for all types of behaviors, social mechanisms seek to identify under what conditions certain behaviors are more or less likely to result in abusive or neglectful parent practices.

This paper provides a framework for beginning to explicate the specific mechanisms by which the ecology of where children and families interact with family and parental characteristics result in child maltreatment. Specifically, mechanisms of the alcohol environment will be explored in order to develop a greater understanding of what supports or hinders maltreating behaviors by parents. Findings from studies investigating these mechanisms can be used to develop primary prevention activities aimed at populations of families living in neighborhoods with characteristics deemed high risk for potential maltreatment or secondary prevention efforts targeted at places where the individuals most at-risk for committing abuse and neglect spend time.

## Social Mechanisms

As researchers, we often are able to identify relationships between variable “x” and variable “y.” For example, parents who abuse alcohol are more likely to physically abuse their children (Ammerman, Kolko, Kirisci, Blackson, & Dawes, 1999; Chaffin, Kelleher, & Hollenberg, 1996), greater densities of alcohol outlets are related to higher rates of child maltreatment in neighborhood areas (Freisthler, 2004; Freisthler, Midanik, & Gruenewald, 2004), and those in poverty are more likely to be involved with the child welfare system (Jonson-Reid, Drake, & Kohl, 2009; Pelton, 1981). These correlational relationships, once identified, provide almost no information on *why* these relationships exist. Certainly, explanations for and theories about why these relationships occur are provided, but the exact mechanism that links one variable to another is generally unknown. In fact, without identifying the mechanisms that generate the relationships, we might unintentionally be giving too much weight to some factors and not enough to others (Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). Incorporating the appropriate variables from various hypotheses relating sets of factors to maltreatment would allow us to get at the real source of what is causing maltreatment. As social welfare practice continues to move toward providing evidence-based services in the field and as funders increasingly require the use of these practices, developing interventions based on a more complete understanding of these mechanisms becomes more important.

The Moving to Opportunities (MTO) program, designed and implemented by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is one example of a good intervention idea that may have taken an approach that did not fully address the mechanisms at play. MTO was a program designed to assist lower income individuals move from highly disadvantaged areas full of social problems (e.g., crime) to areas with fewer social problems. The goal was to determine how neighborhood of residence was related to a variety of problems, including crime, education, employment, and various health outcomes. This was based on a simple premise that where a person lived affected behavior, and having access to more resources in areas with less social problems would mitigate bad outcomes for individuals who had previously lived in worse neighborhood

areas. The findings from studies of MTO were mixed: better short-term outcomes for adult physical and mental health (e.g., Katz, Kling, & Liebman, 2001; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003) but similar or worse outcomes for employment or earnings for household heads (e.g., Katz, Kling, & Liebman, 2001) and long-term academic achievement for youth (e.g., Kling & Liebman, 2004; Leventhal, Fauth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2005; Orr et al., 2003). The fact that not all outcome measures improved suggests that several underlying mechanisms are at work. Individuals moving out of familiar neighborhoods may have been leaving behind trusted and important forms of social support (Orr et al., 2003). Despite moving to areas viewed as having more resources, without these supports in place, families may have not taken advantage of new opportunities available to them. Thus, had attention been paid to both moving individuals *and* providing structure to develop new support networks, outcomes may have improved and been sustained in even more areas. The underlying mechanisms, then, suggest that both location (i.e., neighborhood) and social relationships may interact to produce better outcomes for families.

Focusing on the mechanisms underlying these relationships requires us to think systematically about why and how these relationships occur and to collect data in such a way that allows us to explicitly test sets of mechanisms. Instead of just measuring poverty, one might also need to include a measure of contact with mandated reporters or conduct a general population study that allows for comparisons of parenting behaviors across income groups. These relationships may be more likely to occur only under specific conditions (e.g., extreme stress) or with specific populations (e.g., young parents). Once these conditions are specified, it moves development of policy and practice interventions from a "one size fits all" approach to one that requires specific information on the clients or communities with whom we work. This nuanced understanding of mechanisms may result in more interventions effective at reducing or preventing maltreatment.

To assist with the study of mechanisms, Hedström and Swedberg (1998) identify a typology that describes the interaction between the larger environment and individual behaviors through three types of mechanisms: situational, action-oriented, and transformational. A situational mechanism (macro to

micro) occurs when an individual encounters a situation that affects his or her behavior in a particular way (e.g., increased densities of alcohol outlets increase frequency of drinking). Action-oriented mechanisms (micro to micro) transpire when the characteristics of an individual (e.g., beliefs, desires) result in a specific action (e.g., using drinking to self-medicate during stressful situations). Finally, transformational mechanisms (micro to macro) arise when the behavior of individuals as they interact with each other results in a collective action at the macro level (e.g., increased network size in areas where more opportunities for social interactions exist, such as in neighborhoods with more bars, clubs, or restaurants). All of these examples could increase different types of maltreatment and would suggest different types of interventions to reduce or prevent maltreatment. This typology frames many of the mechanisms described within this paper and allows us to better understand the ways in which social mechanisms can be used to develop interventions to reduce social problems.

## Background of Child Maltreatment

### *Scope of Child Maltreatment*

Child maltreatment, particularly child neglect, within the general population is widespread (Sedlak et al., 2010; Straus et al., 1998); however, official reports tend to underestimate the scope of the problem (U.S. DHHS, 2009). Prevalence estimates for the general population suggest that about 60% of parents used corporal punishment (i.e., spanking on the bottom with a bare hand) while 5% of parents have engaged in physically abusive behaviors (i.e., hitting with a fist, or kicking hard, Straus et al., 1998). Supervision problems (i.e., supervisory neglect) account for 30% of all cases seen in the child welfare system (Coohey, 2003). This is higher than both physical abuse (10.8%) and sexual abuse (7.6%) (U.S. DHHS, 2009).

### *Individual Characteristics and Child Maltreatment*

A variety of parental and child characteristics are related to child maltreatment. Research on child maltreatment has consistently found that it is disproportionately reported among poor families (Gelles, 1997; Jonson-Reid et al., 2009; Pelton, 1981), those with lower levels of education (Gelles, 1997), and

among domestic violence households (Jouriles, McDonald, Slep, Heyman, & Garrido, 2008). Parents are more likely to maltreat their children if they were abused and neglected as children (Berger, 2005; Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001), are younger (Straus et al., 1998), report higher levels of depression (Black et al., 2001), experience higher levels of stress and reactivity (e.g., impulsivity, Berger, 2005), and have more children at home (Berger, 2005; Gelles, 1997).

### *Neighborhood Environment and Child Maltreatment*

Consistently, areas with high poverty rates, housing stress (e.g., residential instability), and drug and alcohol availability have higher rates of maltreatment (Freisthler, Merritt, & LaScala, 2006). High percentage of unemployment and high levels of child care burden (e.g., higher ratios of men compared to women) also tend to have high rates of child maltreatment but this relationship is not as stable (Freisthler et al., 2006). These relationships are often interpreted within the framework of social disorganization described below.

*Child maltreatment and social disorganization.* Population-level studies of child maltreatment have found a positive relationship between social disorganization and child maltreatment (Coulton, Korbin, Su, & Chow, 1995; Freisthler, 2004; Freisthler et al., 2006). A socially disorganized neighborhood is one that lacks a structure to help maintain social controls that allow communities to realize commonly held values. Neighborhoods are commonly measured by constructs related to concentrated disadvantage, child care burden, and residential instability (Coulton et al., 1995; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Perceived neighborhood processes such as low collective efficacy (i.e., the willingness of neighborhood residents to intervene for the common good) and social disorder have been found to be associated with psychological and physical abuse (Guterman, Lee, Taylor, & Rathouz, 2009), crime (Sampson et al., 1997), and intimate partner violence (Browning, 2002). Neighborhood areas with high levels of social disorganization may impede the development of collective efficacy and other socially supportive relationships with neighbors that may prevent or reduce maltreatment (Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999).

*Social support and social networks in neighborhoods.* Having more individuals to provide support with parenting tasks lessens some of the burdens related to child care and can provide parents with assistance during times of extreme stress. Social support can come in a variety of forms: (1) emotional support—talking through problems and asking for advice; (2) instrumental (or tangible) support—material aid such as money or babysitting; and (3) social companionship—spending time with friends and families in recreational activities (DePanfilis, 1996).

When controlling for neighborhood socio-economic status, high risk neighborhoods had fewer neighborhood resources and support than the low risk neighborhoods (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992; Garbarino & Sherman, 1980; Vinson, Baldry, & Hargreaves, 1996); individuals in these areas also had smaller social networks (Coulton et al., 1999; Molnar et al., 2003; Vinson et al., 1996). Parents who neglect their children generally have fewer network members, less frequent contact with members in their supportive networks, and tend to live further away from those network members (Coohey, 1996, 2007; Thompson, 1985). Thus, disorganized neighborhoods, or those characterized by high residential turnover and disadvantage, may prevent social networks from forming or decrease the shared connections between residents who may prevent child maltreatment.

Although social support resources have been linked to lower levels of maltreatment, it would be inappropriate to assume that more contact with one's social network is always advantageous. In a review of social capital literature, Portes (1998) discusses how the same mechanisms that result in positive aspects of social support also result in negative consequences, such as conformity to group norms and downward leveling of social norms. These negative consequences can be found when social support is embedded in social structures that produce less desirable outcomes (i.e. gangs). For example, parents who reported having a larger number of friends who drank alcohol and who perceived greater availability of social companionship (e.g., friends willing to go to parties) are at greater risk of physically abusing their child (Holmes, in review). If a parent is spending time with social support members who are also

heavy drinkers, the parent may engage in such behavior more frequently, thus putting the child at greater risk of being physically abused.

### Alcohol Use and Child Maltreatment

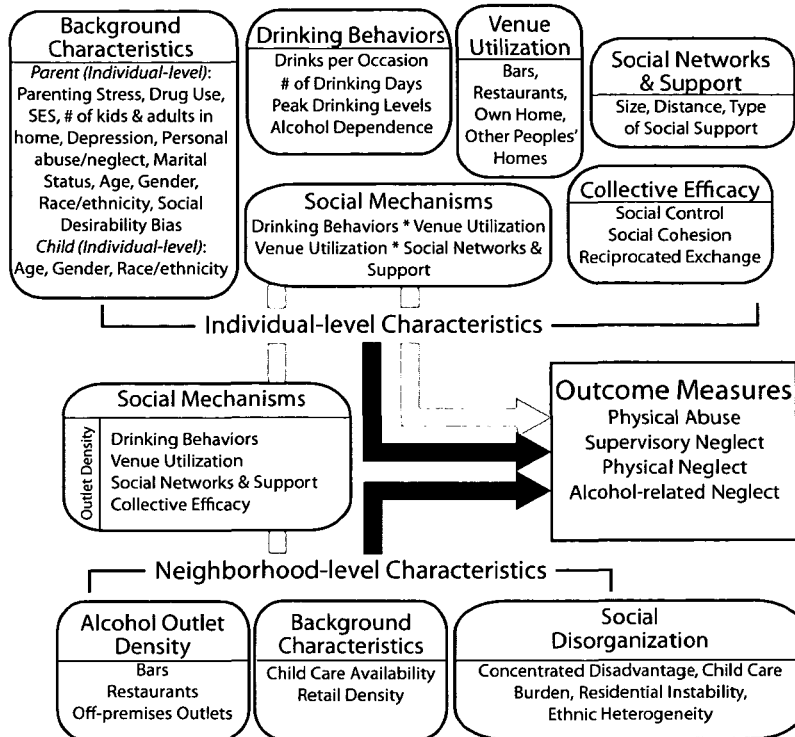
Rates of child maltreatment, particularly physical abuse, are higher among individuals reporting heavy drinking (Berger, 2005; Famularo, Stone, Barnum, & Wharton, 1986; Kelleher, Chaffin, Holleberg, & Fischer, 1994; Murphy et al., 1991; Sun, Shillington, Hohman, & Jones, 2001). Children are at 2 times the risk for being physically abused and 3 times the risk for being physically neglected if one parent abuses alcohol when compared to children who had no parents abusing alcohol (Dube et al., 2001). That risk increased to over 3 times for physical abuse and 6 times for physical neglect if both parents abuse alcohol (Dube et al., 2001). Sedlak and colleagues (2010) found that 10% of all cases of child maltreatment in the general population have alcohol use as a factor in the abuse or neglect incident.

#### *Social Mechanisms: Alcohol Environment and Child Maltreatment*

Figure 1 shows a conceptual model of the social mechanisms that may represent the relationship between alcohol and child maltreatment at both individual and neighborhood level. An underlying assumption of this model is that there are certain conditions under which alcohol use and the density of alcohol outlets may be more or less likely to result in abusive or neglectful parenting practices. That is, not all parents have to abuse alcohol for alcohol to play a role in parenting practices that are physically abusive or neglectful.

*The role of the alcohol environment.* Density of alcohol outlets appears to be positively related to rates of child maltreatment when using several geographic units of analysis (Freisthler, 2004; Freisthler et al., 2004; Freisthler, Needell, & Gruenewald, 2005; Markowitz & Grossman, 1998). At the state level, Markowitz and Grossman (1998) studied the relationship between state excise taxes on beer, alcohol outlet density, and child maltreatment. They found that fewer outlets per 1,000 people were significantly related to a decrease in the

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Social Mechanisms Relating Alcohol Outlet Density and Alcohol Use Behaviors to Child Maltreatment



\* and gray arrows show interaction effects

probability (4%) of severe child maltreatment. Alcohol outlet densities may contribute to child maltreatment in smaller geographic areas as well. Recent cross-sectional studies have found that higher densities of bars are related to higher substantiated reports of child maltreatment at the Census tract and block group levels (Freisthler, 2004; Freisthler et al., 2005). This relationship remained after controlling for measures of social disorganization at the neighborhood level, including concentrated disadvantage, residential instability, immigrant concentration, and child care burden. Alcohol outlets are not just a marker for socially disorganized neighborhoods but contribute independently to problems in these areas.

Alcohol outlet density is not the only feature of the alcohol environment that affects maltreatment. Higher taxes on beer,

liquor, and wine are related to lower levels of child maltreatment (Markowitz & Grossman, 1998) and fatalities to children under 10 years of age (Sen, 2006). Further, a retrospective study that examined reduction in blood alcohol content (BAC) laws to .08 found a reduction in child homicide deaths (Sen, 2006). Increases in taxes on alcohol are related to shorter time for children in foster care, particularly for those whose primary reason for removal was parental alcohol abuse (Markowitz, Cuellar, Conrad, & Grossman, 2011). Thus, geographic availability of alcohol (as measured by outlet densities) and economic availability of alcohol (as measured by taxes) show that policies enacted at the state or national level may affect rates of maltreatment.

#### *Alcohol Outlet Densities and "Frail" Neighborhoods*

Neighborhood areas with high levels of social disorganization already have a number of conditions (e.g., low collective efficacy) that make them vulnerable to a variety of social problems, including crime and child maltreatment (Coulton et al., 1995; Freisthler, 2004; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999). With an already weakened (or "frail") neighborhood structure, these neighborhoods may lack the appropriate social capital to absorb the negative effects related to high densities of alcohol outlets in their community (Gruenewald, Freisthler, Remer, LaScala, & Treno, 2006). Greater densities of alcohol outlets in areas with high social disorganization act in a manner that increases the likelihood residents will retreat from neighborhood interactions, depriving themselves of those contacts with neighbors that might develop into socially supportive relationships (Bennett, DiIulio, & Walters, 1996). On the other hand, with this transformational mechanism, neighborhoods that have higher densities of alcohol outlets but lower levels of social disorganization may be able to absorb the effects of outlets without risking further harm to children due to the increased levels of social capital available to those neighborhood residents.

#### *Social Mechanisms: Alcohol Outlets, Alcohol Use, and Child Maltreatment*

Greater alcohol outlet densities may lead to more frequent and higher quantity of alcohol use by parents, placing

children at greater risk for being abused or neglected. A major mechanism by which the physical availability of alcohol affects child maltreatment may be through parental drinking. Parents who frequently drink heavy amounts may regularly place their children at increased risk for abuse and neglect, making it more likely that they will come to the attention of Child Protective Services. Yet despite the wide-spread correlational assessment of alcohol use and child maltreatment, no causal studies exist showing that increased alcohol use causes child maltreatment. An important next step is to identify how drinking at different levels may exhibit a dose-response relationship with child maltreatment. In other words, does each additional drink increase the likelihood that parents will use physically abusive parenting practices? Does more drinking increase frequency of using more severe types of physical abuse as disinhibition increases? Or, is there a point at which parents become incapacitated from drinking that makes it less likely they will physically abuse their children, but more likely that they will be unable to supervise them adequately?

Risk for abuse or neglect for children of parents who are moderate or infrequent drinkers is likely to still exist. These children may still be at risk, but that risk may be more infrequent and less likely to be detected. Additionally, an infrequent drinker (e.g., less than once a month) who drinks only at special occasions (e.g., weddings) but consumes large quantities to the point of intoxication, may drive home with his or her children in the car, a form of supervisory neglect (Coohey, 2003; Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). These children may be at high risk for abuse or neglect, but only on an occasional basis throughout the course of the year. These situational types of child maltreatment are certainly much more difficult to detect but can have fatal consequences for children. Thus, while much of the focus on the relationship between child maltreatment and alcohol use focuses on those caregivers who are dependent on alcohol, the environment in which alcohol use occurs can also provide important information on maltreating behaviors. Understanding the spectrum of harm for physical abuse or neglect across all drinking levels is an important contribution of this theoretical framework, as moderate and light drinkers may be more likely to be affected by certain types of prevention efforts.

*Social Mechanisms: Routine Drinking Activities and Venue Use*

Where a parent chooses to drink may also affect the likelihood that he or she will maltreat his or her children. Venue use (e.g., bars, restaurants) for drinking activities varies by both sociodemographic characteristics and drinking behaviors. Compared to single people, married people tend to use bars less often (Gruenewald, Treno, Nephew, & Ponicki, 1995) and drink in their own homes more often (Treno, Alaniz, & Gruenewald, 2000). On the other hand, heavier drinking married people use bars more often than single people or married couples without children (Treno et al., 2000). Similarly, as an action-oriented mechanism, a parent's utilization of bars as a recreational activity may decrease parental supervision and monitoring, thereby increasing a child's risk of being neglected (Coohey, 2008), particularly since these activities take a parent away from home. Use of bars can also represent an economic strain on families, as alcohol at this venue is more expensive than purchases made through off-premise alcohol outlets (Gruenewald, Johnson, Millar, & Mitchell, 2000). Thus, parents who spend significant amounts of time at bars drinking may also be spending valuable resources that may lead to physical neglect of their child(ren)'s needs. In a preliminary study on the relationship between venue utilization and child physical abuse, Freisthler (2011) found that parents who frequently went to and/or drank at bars and parties at friends' and in their own homes were more likely to use physically abusive parenting practices. These results suggest that where a person drinks, independently of how much they drink, may negatively interact with parenting abilities.

*Outlet density and venue utilization.* As shown in Figure 1, drinking behaviors and drinking venue utilization are expected to be directly related to maltreatment. Additionally, venue utilization may moderate the relationship between drinking behaviors and child maltreatment. These mechanisms rely on the tenets of routine activities theory, which states that harm occurs when there is a suitable target (the child), a motivated offender (parent or other adult), and the absence of effective guardians (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Under most conditions, parents will not participate in abusive or neglectful behaviors, but that may change in certain locations and/or under certain circumstances. Alcohol outlets (e.g., liquor stores) that

allow ready access for consumption in the home (where fewer guardians capable of stopping the violence are present) may indirectly influence child maltreatment rates, particularly with respect to physical abuse (Freisthler et al., 2004). However, for this to occur, alcohol must be available in the home for consumption. Purchase of alcohol for use at home generally occurs at off-premise establishments, such as liquor, grocery, or convenience stores. Thus, the primary mechanism affecting child maltreatment may be through greater densities of off-premise alcohol outlets. This greater density may decrease the costs associated with obtaining alcohol (e.g., reduced travel costs) and increase the frequency of alcohol use, thereby increasing the risk of child physical abuse. The effects of off-premise density and alcohol use on perpetration of physical abuse may be higher in homes of single parents as fewer guardians are available to prevent the physical abuse from occurring (Freisthler et al., 2004).

Similarly a parent who drinks a couple glasses of wine at dinner in a restaurant may find himself or herself over the legal limit. After dinner, the parent may have to drive home, with his or her children in the car—a form of supervisory neglect (Coohey, 2003). Parents living in areas with higher densities of restaurants that serve alcohol have more opportunities to drink and drive when eating out. In fact, individuals living in areas with higher densities of restaurants drink more frequently and drive after drinking more often (Gruenewald, Treno, & Johnson, 2002). Thus, where parents drink may affect the type of maltreatment their children experience. Location of drinking venues and their use by parents may also point to secondary prevention efforts that target parents at locations where they drink.

*Venue utilization and support.* Generally, tangible social support that provides additional resources for child supervision acts to reduce rates of neglect. However, support in the form of social companionship may lead to greater or lesser rates of child neglect, since it may be conditional upon the social activities reinforced. Some parents may experience substantial social support for participating in activities outside the home, live in areas with high densities of bars, and enjoy drinking in the company of friends to the neglect of their children. In 19% of supervisory neglect cases in New York State, parents

were found to be participating in illegal or irresponsible activities, including drinking. In an additional 12% of cases, parents were otherwise "out" for other entertainment purposes when the supervisory neglect incident occurred (Jones, 1987).

Recent research by Coohey (2007) suggests that parents who leave children home alone (vs. with inadequate supervision) may do so because individuals in their social networks are not adequate caregivers. For example, parents who spend increased amounts of time at bars may develop support networks of individuals who are also bar-goers and likely drinkers. Although these individuals provide social companionship support, having social network members who drink increases the risk of physical abuse (Holmes, *in review*) and they are likely to not be available at night for babysitting when the parent is spending time at bars. In this case, preferred drinking venue may interact with type of social support from social networks such that parents spending large amounts of time in bars are receiving social companionship, but not tangible support (i.e., babysitting), leaving children vulnerable to supervisory neglect. Not only might bar density increase the number of locations parents can go without children, it may also change the types of support networks these parents have, placing children at higher risk for being left home alone or without adequate supervision.

The type of support received may only be one mechanism through which venue utilization and social support interact to increase maltreatment. Highly social parents who have a lot of members in their social networks may also be vulnerable to committing maltreatment through supervisory neglect, especially in areas where there are a lot of activities directed towards adults. A high density of restaurants that serve alcohol can point to an active night life in a city or neighborhood area that caters to adult interests. Having many individuals with whom a parent wants to socialize may mean those living in areas with increased opportunities for socialization in these adult venues may be more likely to do so. On a practical level this increases the need for adequate babysitting and, failing that, increases the opportunities for supervisory neglect to occur (Freisthler & Williams, *in review*).

Where the social networks are formed might also speak

to how venues are used and the risks associated with them. Parents whose children participate in sports might become friendly and celebrate their children's sporting achievements at parties or gatherings that involve alcohol use. Both authors have observed instances of parents drinking alcohol as part of their children's sporting celebrations or events. In one case, a youth (8 – 10 years) baseball team held their end of the season party at a bar where parents were observed to be drinking shots. In another, parents celebrated the first win of the lacrosse season by drinking wine at the park while the children were practicing. Although isolated observations, these incidents may point to a culture of how social networks developed through children's activities may support drinking that may lead to maltreatment. These special events might occur irregularly but the act of drinking and subsequently driving after drinking may place these children at risk for harm.

### Challenges to Studying Social Mechanisms

In order to study the exact mechanisms by which the environment or individual behaviors are related to child maltreatment, one must be able to specify what those mechanisms are. This requires detailing the mechanisms *a priori*. As stated by Stinchcombe (1968), most scientists can easily provide two or three explanations for their findings in correlation studies after the fact. The real difficulty is in providing a strong theoretical justification for studying specific mechanisms and being able to test them with the data at hand. The mechanisms described here are complicated, as they are trying to realistically depict the complexities of human behavior and our interactions with our social and physical environment.

Further, without investigating these relationships over time or some aspect of the patterning of the events, the studies remain correlational with little to no information on the causality of the mechanisms. Studying these relationships cross-sectionally will provide a basic understanding of whether or not there is any evidence to support the theoretical justification for specific mechanisms. However, to truly explicate the relationships, surveys must ask questions about when,

for example, alcohol use occurs in relationship to maltreating behaviors. Another approach would be to study these mechanisms in longitudinal studies where the beginning of alcohol use behaviors and influence of neighborhood environment can be studied over time. These studies also require large sample sizes in order to have enough statistical power to identify significant relationships when they exist. All of these result in higher monetary costs and larger amounts of time and effort need to complete such studies. These costs may be prohibitive, thus limiting one's ability to design and complete this type of research.

The reality is that no matter what mechanisms you specify, by virtue of choosing to measure some constructs, some behaviors, and not others, it influences what you do or do not find. This is one of the greatest challenges faced in understanding and studying the effect of mechanisms on behavior. At some point the focus must be on determining what mechanisms are most likely to result in child maltreatment so practitioners can develop prevention efforts that will be most effective at reducing maltreatment.

The challenges associated with studying and understanding the influence of social mechanisms are not inconsequential. It requires a level of theoretical development and justification that goes past describing and explaining simple correlational findings. Despite these complexities, this approach also has the ability to significantly advance how we think about and develop interventions to address social problems, including child maltreatment.

### Promise in Understanding Social Mechanisms

The potential for developing multiple avenues of prevention and intervention programs based on a better understanding of the nuances of the social mechanisms is great. Here, we theorize that the alcohol use environment does not only affect maltreating behaviors through alcohol use itself. Social network characteristics, social support, and neighborhood cohesion may all create environments that either condone or sanction abusive and neglectful parenting practices. And, in the case of social support, it can do both, depending on the

type of support received. This challenges professionals designing prevention programs and working with parents at-risk for abuse or neglect to devise assessment tools and intervention strategies that assess the positive and negative qualities of individuals, their social systems, and their environments to determine how such factors are being used by a given parent. Clinicians may want to be even more specific and ask questions about where the individuals in a client's support network live. Based on this framework, having a vast social network may not be helpful if none of the social network members live close enough to babysit in a pinch, or if the members of the client's social network who do live close are not the ones who provide tangible support. This distinction between knowing if a client has a lot of social support versus knowing where that support lives and the specific types of support he or she receives holds implications for helping the clients develop effective parenting and coping strategies.

The direct effects of the alcohol environment on child physical abuse and duration of foster care suggests opportunities for primary prevention efforts that are likely to reduce abusive and neglectful parenting practices. These include raising taxes on alcohol purchases (Markowitz & Grossman, 1998) or lowering the legal blood alcohol content (BAC) for drivers carrying children (Quinlan, Brewer, Sleet, & Dellinger, 2000). These global-level policies may be effective at reducing maltreatment rates, as suggested by previous work (Sen, 2006).

At the community level, understanding social mechanisms requires social service agencies to focus on the larger environment from where their clients come. Enhancing livability in those areas may decrease child maltreatment. This could occur by developing a sound neighborhood economic structure and institutional supports, possibly through local planning and development regulations that decrease the number of permits available for alcohol outlets. This could also be completed by increasing the roles of place managers in these neighborhoods. Place managers are influential people in neighborhoods who act like "eyes on the street" to prevent and deter crime (Eck, 1995; Mazerolle, Kadleck, & Roehl, 1998). This might also require neighborhood areas to find creative and innovative ways to tap into natural helping networks to formalize these

relationships in at-risk areas or among at-risk populations to create stronger neighborhood foundations.

More important than identifying global prevention efforts that may succeed in reducing maltreatment are the nuanced secondary prevention efforts that may arise from a more thorough understanding of the mechanisms relating alcohol use, social support, and venue utilization to child abuse and neglect. With regards to social support, the development of neighborhood babysitting co-operatives could increase informal sources of support for families with young children and be utilized even during evening hours when parents may utilize drinking venues or attend parties where drinking is likely to occur. This sort of child care option is available at many workout facilities and could be an extension of "Mom's Day Out" but focus upon nighttime activities of parents and include opportunities for overnight stays or "slumber parties" for children so parents have several hours in the morning to deal with the aftereffects of drinking to intoxication the night before.

Another strategy for increasing informal support might be through the development and use of "welcome wagons" in high-risk neighborhoods, as characterized by high rates of poverty, disadvantage and maltreatment. These committees could consist of both residents of these neighborhood areas who are welcoming new families to the area and service providers who may provide incentives to use services that most families in these areas may utilize (e.g., WIC or TANF). This approach would also allow service providers to quickly identify newcomers to neighborhood areas and begin to develop relationships that may facilitate greater use of these services. These events may also be used to form informal networks of parent support groups that are used to exchange parenting strategies and information on local resources related to families (Cushman, 1998).

Social mechanisms identifying differential use of alcohol venues by parents may also suggest targeted secondary prevention efforts. For example, if parents who use restaurants more often are prone to drinking and driving with their children in the car, warnings about the hazards of drinking and driving on vulnerable passengers could be listed on alcohol menus. Responsible beverage service practices that reduce the amount a person drinks (e.g., Saltz, 1987; Saltz & Stanghetta,

1997) could be expanded to include specific strategies for monitoring customers with children at the table.

Similarly, if the study of specific social mechanisms finds that drinking at special occasions (e.g., weddings) leads to increased risk of maltreatment for children, specific strategies could be recommended that reduce these problems. Brides and grooms might hire a babysitter that would watch children overnight if the reception is expected to go late into the night. They could also hire shuttles that transport guests from the reception venue to home or a hotel to decrease drinking and driving with children in the car. Sports leagues for children could provide financial support or venue use for end of the season parties that do not include alcohol.

As we continue to learn more about how and when the specific mechanisms result in abusive and neglectful parenting practices, this knowledge can be used to further tailor interventions that are designed to prevent and reduce child maltreatment. Thus the real promise in identifying and systematically studying mechanisms will be the ability to develop and refine interventions designed to reach at-risk populations in those locations where they spend time, allowing us to better determine what works for whom and under what conditions. Multiple layers and levels of interventions may help ensure that fewer families fall through the proverbial cracks and reduce harm directed towards children.

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# Private Pension Protections since ERISA: The Expanded Role of the Individual

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*Designed to provide security and equity to defined benefit (DB) pension plans, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) became law in 1974. Since that time, the economy has shifted to a more globalized, non-unionized, service-based environment, where defined contribution (DC) plans replaced DB plans as the dominant type of private pension plan. Today workers and retirees bear the burden of managing their pension plans and the associated risks. To protect Americans against the financial risks they face in retirement and ensure greater economic security in old age, targeted financial education, research, and fundamental pension policy reform are required.*

*Key words: pensions, ERISA, retirement income, individual responsibility, financial education*

Primary government programs, namely Social Security and Medicare, face significant shortfalls. Social Security, for example, faces a long-term financial imbalance (Munnell, 2011). Fewer workers will finance the retirement of the growing baby boom generation, yielding a system of benefits and current tax rates that are not sustainable in the future. Medicare, too, is at risk of not sustaining the current level of health insurance it provides adults. Between 1996 and 2005 out-of-pocket medical expenses increased by 39.4 percent (Paez, Zhao, & Hwang, 2009), a trend that is likely to continue. As a result, the role of private pensions is heightened, requiring private pensions to contribute larger amounts to retirement income. Nevertheless, the private pension landscape has shifted in ways that may

result in lower private pension wealth for retirees (Kapinos, 2009).

Private pensions have experienced profound change over the past forty years. Firms have shifted from the provision of defined benefit (DB) plans, where the employer bore the economic and demographic risk (Scahill, 1999), to defined contribution (DC) plans. Although the American welfare state is premised on a mix of private, tax-subsidized benefits, that pattern is being undermined as firms shift to providing 401(k) plans and reduce the benefits they provide employees (Peters, 2005). The transition from DB to DC plans has placed a premium on participants' decision-making competencies (Clark & Strauss, 2008). Today individuals must take more fiscal responsibility for their pension plans and retirement income, yet many are not equipped with the knowledge to manage this responsibility. This lack of knowledge can have a profound effect on retirement income and public and private policies, as they relate to administering private pension income to America's older adults. The erosion of employee pension benefits will have far-reaching effects, potentially decreasing retirement income and increasing poverty levels in old age.

### Historical Development of Private Pensions

The Social Security Act and its Amendments were precursors to the large-scale development of private pension plans and prompted the growth of private pensions in the United States. Between 1940 and 1945 the number of pension plans grew dramatically. In 1940, 1,530 private pensions existed; this grew to a total of 6,700 in 1945, covering 6.5 million employees (Ippolito, 1997). This positive growth was due to changes in tax policy, the stabilization of wages during World War II and the Korean War, and actions of the War Labor Board (WLB) (Ippolito, 1997).

To finance World War II, Congress increased the top corporate and individual tax rates; six percent of the nation paid tax in 1939, which increased to nearly seventy-five percent by 1945 (Sass, 1997). As a result, tax sheltering became an important concern to the more highly compensated employees (Koff & Park, 1999). Additionally, the Revenue Act of 1942 regulated

tax incentives by tightening requirements for the qualification of pension plans and improving the tax advantage for qualified plans, which included no capitations on pensions paid by tax-exempt trusts, no vesting requirements, and the regulation of pension costing and funding (Sass, 1997).

The war experience demonstrated the usefulness of the pension as a compensatory instrument (Sass, 1997), where the deferred nature of the compensation would enhance employee loyalty to the company. As tax rates decreased and wage flexibility returned after 1945, the private pension emerged in the post-war era as a widely recognized management tool (Sass, 1997).

Labor, too, played a significant role in the development of pensions. Although organized labor's main interest in private pensions did not begin until after World War II, two main forces were instrumental in its development (Hacker, 2002). Unions, namely The United Auto Workers (UAW), put private pensions and welfare benefits at the center of their bargaining drives. These organizations embraced fringe benefits, specifically private pensions, in their negotiations with employers because they saw them as effective tools in their battle for benefits (Hacker, 2002). Second, the Federal government pushed pensions onto the bargaining table as a means to resist demands to increase public social insurance (Ippolito, 1997). In support of labor's efforts, in 1949 the Supreme Court approved a National Labor Relations Board ruling that pensions were a legitimate issue to use in collective bargaining (Hudson, 2005).

From 1950 to 1960 the largest employers, namely manufacturers, dominated the pension plan expansion. Over this same period the number of plans increased dramatically, as did the proportion of workers covered, which grew from 12 percent to 33 percent between 1940 and 1960 (Sass, 1997). Yet, during the 1950s, complaints surfaced about losses of employee pension benefits. For those who retired early, the requirements of age and service were barriers to their receipt of pension benefits (Hudson, 2005).

Growing evidence of fraud, embezzlement, and the mismanagement of investment pension funds exacerbated these problems, and Congress responded by enacting the Federal Welfare and Pension Plans Disclosure Act of 1958 (PL 85-836),

which was significantly amended in 1962 (McGill, Brown, Haley, Schieber, & Warshawsky, 2010). A weak component of the legislation was that plan participants had prime responsibility for monitoring pension plan activity. The individual plan participants were expected to spot fraud and criminal activity and the legislation provided them with a way to seek relief from the wrongdoing (McGill et al., 2010). This was a risk for participants because few were knowledgeable of pension plan activity and, for the most part, they had neither the time nor interest in this responsibility. Additionally, there were a number of gaps in corporate pension plans, such as the ability of a corporation to default on its obligations (Sass, 1997). These gaps alerted policymakers to the need for a new approach to retirement security. Although there were several attempts to regulate and oversee aspects of the private pension system prior to 1974, none were as comprehensive as ERISA.

### ERISA

While the number of workers covered by private pensions increased through the 1960s and the burden of detecting fraud and criminal activity shifted from the plan participant to the Departments of Labor and Justice, individual participants had inadequate protections (Hacker, 2002). The most prominent issues that fostered the design of ERISA were defaults, namely that of the Studebaker Company, and abuses that became public as a result of the Studebaker collapse (Wooten, 2001, 2004).

The Studebaker-Packard Corporation (Studebaker) collapse, a prime focusing event (Wooten, 2001), created the impetus for moving private pension legislation forward. At the time, Studebaker was a large automotive manufacturing company in Indiana. Known as a model welfare capitalist firm, it had a negotiated contract signed by the UAW Union (Klein, 2003). Although the UAW union was a champion of conservative funding and investing, the Studebaker pension plan did not have the assets required to redeem all the benefits that were promised (Sass, 1997). The pension plan was millions of dollars short and 7,000 workers received little or nothing from the company (Klein, 2003). Moreover, there was rigorous

competition from Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler Corporation, the Big Three automakers, at the time. As a result, Studebaker closed its South Bend, Indiana plant on November 1, 1964 and terminated its labor contract one month later (Sass, 1997).

Based on the fall of Studebaker in 1964, a number of abuses in pension plan structure became public and prompted future legislation. Unreasonably high vesting thresholds prevented long-time workers from qualifying for benefits (Wooten, 2004). Also, pension rules defined “unbroken” service in narrow terms. For example, if a worker was re-assigned to a job with a different classification, this was considered a break in service and adversely affected the worker’s pension benefit. Additionally, courts upheld practices of employers by reserving their rights to modify, decrease, or deny benefits or eliminate pensions at will (Sass, 1997). Employers avoided a number of liabilities by asserting in plan documents that workers were claiming benefits against the plan, and not against the assets of the corporation (Klein, 2003). Due to these abuses, the Studebaker shutdown became a catalyst for reform and prompted future legislation (Wooten, 2001).

Congress passed the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) to eliminate abuses through greater federal regulation and guarantees (Klein, 2003). Additionally, the UAW pension specialists devised a remedy that became a precursor to Title IV of ERISA, the termination insurance program (Wooten, 2001). The remedy moved default risk (risk that a pension plan will terminate without enough funds to meet its obligations) (Wooten, 2001) and termination insurance onto the legislative agenda and stimulated the enactment of private pension legislation, ERISA. This effort took ten years to come to fruition.

The ERISA legislation originated as a Presidential initiative under Kennedy in 1963. Although Johnson pursued the drafting of the ERISA legislation, the labor movement and leading business groups were hostile to it, so the process came to an abrupt halt (Hacker, 2002). Nixon’s administration countered the reform agenda, but with his resignation legislators were eager to prove to the American people that the political process was not broken. As a result, ERISA legislation was processed

expeditiously. It passed in the House on August 20, 1974, in the Senate on August 22, 1974 and was signed by the newly installed president, Gerald R. Ford, on Labor Day, September 2, 1974 (Sass, 1997).

Although its creation was a lengthy process, ERISA was designed to redress regulatory shortcomings that deprived employees of old-age retirement income security (Ledolter & Power, 1984). Among its many provisions and amendments, ERISA's over-riding purpose remains the provision of security and equity to the retirement income of private-sector employees (Altman & Marmor, 1988). As the first comprehensive legislation regulating many aspects of private pensions and savings plans, ERISA was the product of four congressional committees: the House Ways and Means Committee, the House Labor Committee, the Senate Labor Committee, and the Senate Finance Committee, which are members of the Departments of Labor and the Treasury (Scahill, 1999). ERISA's objectives were:

- to ensure that workers and beneficiaries receive adequate information about their employee benefit plans;
- to set standards of conduct for those managing employee benefit plans and plan funds;
- to determine that adequate funds are set aside to pay promised pension benefits;
- to ensure that workers receive pension benefits after they have satisfied certain minimum requirements; and
- to safeguard pension benefits for workers whose pension plans are terminated. (Coleman, 1989, p. 3)

The successes of ERISA are noteworthy; benefit security and fiduciary responsibility have improved, as has funding for poorly managed funds (Scahill, 1999). As a result, between 1975 and 2005 there was a significant increase in total number of pension plans, number of participants, as well as in the financial assets of private pension funds. More retirees and employees are participating in pension plans than ever before. Through the ERISA legislation, employers are required to adhere to guidelines that did not exist prior to 1974.

### Pension Eligibility, Participation, and the Termination of Plans

For pension plans to operate fairly and effectively, ERISA requires certain criteria to be met. For example, to participate in a private pension plan, an employee must be eligible. The term 'eligibility' refers to the conditions an employee must meet before being covered by a pension plan; these conditions generally involve attaining a minimum age and completing a minimum period of service with an employer (Coleman, 1989). ERISA does not set these minimums; it only requires that these criteria are set in advance, are clearly communicated to participants, and are not arbitrarily changed by the employer (Sass, 1997).

Pension contributions begin to accrue as soon as an employee satisfies eligibility requirements and becomes a participant in a pension plan. Yet, no legal right to receive any benefits from those contributions exists until an employee becomes vested (Coleman, 1989). Vesting periods are waiting periods before rights to benefits can be exercised (Crystal & Shea, 2003). These periods are established by employers and can range from five to fifteen years. Once vested, an employee "owns" the right to receive a retirement benefit from that plan when retired; in most cases, this right is maintained even if they leave that employer (Coleman, 1989). If an employee leaves a company before vesting, they forfeit any right to a benefit upon retirement.

Benefits accrue differently in defined benefit (DB) and defined contribution (DC) plans. In DB plans, once an employee is a participant, the employee begins to accrue a specific amount of money each year toward a monthly retirement benefit (Coleman, 1989), which is invested by the employer. The amount accrued each year is based on a formula applied to salary and years of service. The employee gains a legal right to the accruals, when vested, but does not actually receive the benefit until the agreed-upon retirement period time is reached. In a DC plan, the participant's accrued benefit is the balance in an individual's account and is invested and managed by the participant.

In 1974, at the time of the implementation of ERISA, three Federal agencies were made responsible for its

administration: the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC), the Department of the Treasury, including the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA). While the latter two are responsible for DB and DC benefit plans, including 401(k) plans, the PBGC guarantees benefits of DB plans only. The PBGC was designed to reduce the risk of pension forfeiture by mandating that all firms participate in a common insurance pool (Hacker, 2002). This governmental underwriting of private pension risk marked a novel departure for the federal government in the pension field (Hacker, 2002).

The PBGC is a tax-exempt, self-financed, independent corporation, whose income comes from premiums paid by private pension plans that are subject to termination insurance (Coleman, 1989). It provides plan termination insurance ensuring employees are paid at least part of their benefits upon termination of a plan. Additionally, it is liable for the payment of all guaranteed or insured benefits in single-employer benefit plans. The PBGC also provides loans to financially troubled multi-employer pension plans (Coleman, 1989). The PBGC receives no funds from general tax revenue, and its obligations are not backed by the credit of the U.S. government (Sass, 1997). Its operations are funded by the insurance premiums, assets from pension plans trusted to PBGC, investment income, and recoveries from companies responsible for trustee plans (Sass, 1997).

Today the PBGC insures the pensions of 44 million workers in more than 27,000 private sector DB pension plans (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2011a). Yet, during the past decade, the PBGC has come under pressure. There has been an unprecedented number of pension plan terminations with substantial levels of underfunding. A number of insolvent pensions, predominantly in the airline industry, were turned over to the PBGC in the early 2000s, which assumed the pensions' liabilities. In 2004 the PBGC posted its largest shortfall in the agency's 30-year history. Losses from completed and probable pension plan terminations totaled \$14.7 billion for the year (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2011a). At the end of fiscal year 2010, the PBGC's net accumulated financial deficit was \$23 billion (U. S. Government Accountability Office,

2011a). As a result, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) placed the PBGC's single-employer program on its list of 'high risk' government programs in need of immediate attention in July, 2003 and added the multiemployer program to the list in January, 2009 (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2011a). Today each program faces increased risk due to the steep downturn in the financial markets (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2011a).

### Operation of Private Pension Plans

In 2004, 51 percent of all workers in the United States between the ages of 21 and 64 participated in an employer-sponsored private pension plan (Munnell & Perun, 2006). In addition to an employee's level of income, participation in employer-sponsored plans depends on the size of the employer, employment status (e.g., full-time or part-time), age, union status, tenure, and industry. Until recently, employers offered retirement benefits because of Federal income tax advantages, the anticipated reduction in employee turnover, and as a retirement incentive for older employees (Ippolito, 1997), creating powerful financial incentives that influence individual work and retirement decisions of employees and employers.

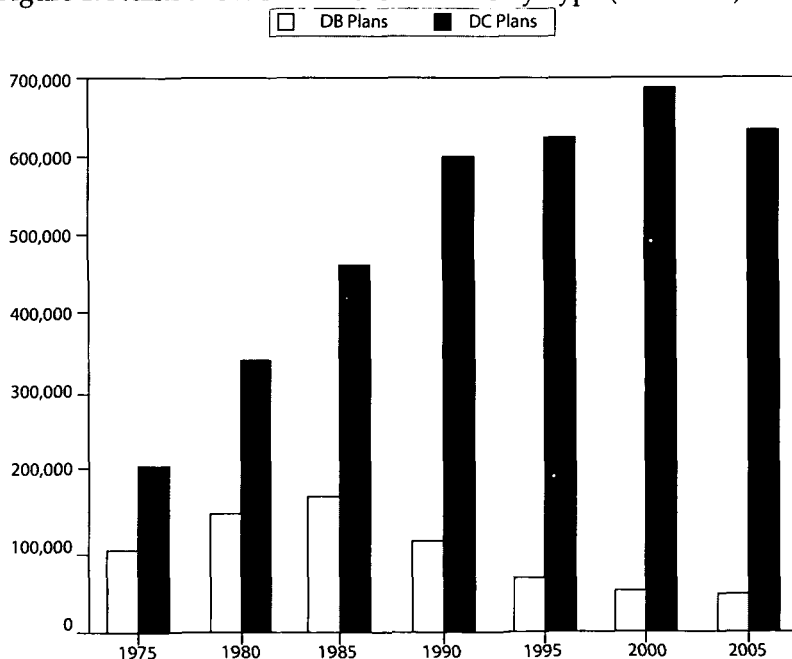
As a form of deferred income, private pensions are administered as DB and DC plans. The employer, who makes pre-tax contributions into a pension fund for all participants, funds the DB plan. Participants typically do not make contributions. Plan contributions are held in a trust on behalf of all participants, where contributions are subject to federal funding rules and regulations. In this type of pension plan, the employer owns the assets in the fund, directs the investments, and bears the risk (Gale, Papke, & VanDerhei, 2005). A DB plan provides income that commences after an employee retires; this is considered a guaranteed annuity.

As long as the employer's financial health is strong, the fulfillment of retirement income is probable through a DB plan. However, when businesses encounter financial difficulty, the promise is at-risk. Since this risk jeopardizes retiree's incomes, employers are required to pre-fund DB pension plans. Through the ERISA legislation, the PBGC guarantees the benefits within

limits and charges insurance premiums to the plans, which are intended to cover the agency's expected costs (Gale et al., 2005).

In contrast to a DB plan, a DC plan provides an employee with an individual account in which the benefit provided consists of contributions made by the employee and the employer, and includes any investment earnings gained. The employer's contributions are based on a pre-determined formula; most often the employee and the employer contributions are placed in an individual account on behalf of the participant. It is then the responsibility of the participant to manage the investment, and as a result, the employee bears the risk of the fluctuating asset values (Gale et al., 2005). A DC plan is not subject to the termination insurance program (PBGC), hence the individual bears the risk of the plan.

Figure 1. Number of Private Pension Plans by Type (1975-2005)

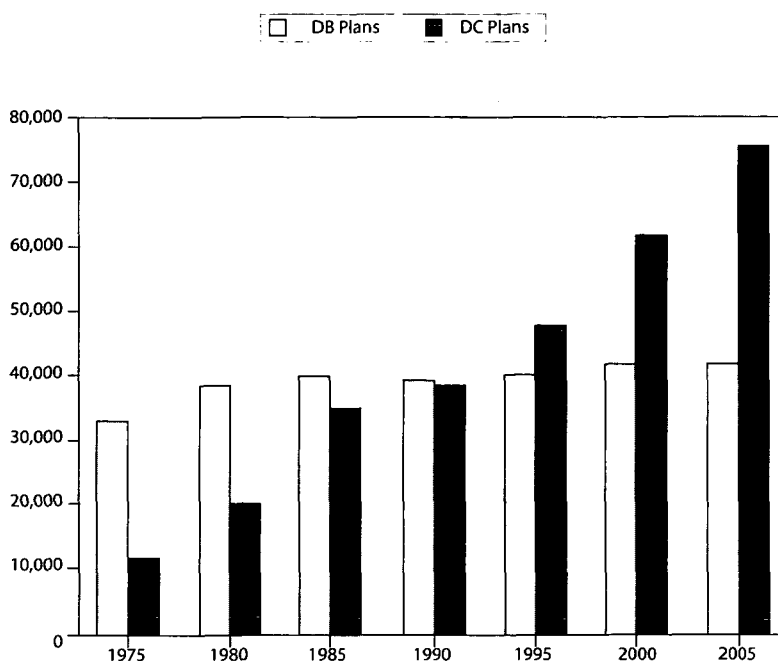


Source: U.S. Department of Labor (2011) (Table E1)

A hybrid of a DB and DC plan also exists and is known as a cash balance plan. Cash balance plans, introduced by Bank of America in the early 1980s, are DB plans that look and feel like

DC plans, where the basic benefit is provided as a lump-sum, and not as an annuity (McGill et al., 2010). An annual allocation is provided to the participant's account as a percentage of pay; these accounts grow through a rate established by a predetermined formula (McGill et al., 2010). Schieber (2005) reported that hybrid plans are preferable for younger and more mobile workers.

Figure 2. Number of Private Pension Plan Participants by Type, in thousands (1975-2005)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor (2011) (Table E5)

As Figures 1 and 2 indicate, since the enactment of ERISA in 1974, the number of pension plans and participants in pension plans grew dramatically. The total number of DB and DC plans grew from 311,100 in 1975 to 680,000 in 2005, where DC plans accounted for the majority of the growth. In 1975, 66.8 percent of all plans were DC plans, whereas in 2005, 93 percent of all plans were DC plans. New plan formations in recent years have been small, with the total of single-employer private plans increasing by about 1 percent, where new plan creations

were offset by terminations and mergers (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2011b). These trends are noteworthy because of their implications for workers and retirees.

In addition, there has been a significant increase in the total number of plan participants. In 1975, approximately 44.5 million individuals participated in a private pension plan; this increased to 117 million in 2005 (U. S. Department of Labor, 2011), a 163 percent increase in the number of participants. Similar to the growth in the number of DC plans, the number of DC plan participants also grew more than DB plan participants. In 1975, 26 percent of the total participants were in DC plans; whereas in 2005, 64 percent were in DC plans (U. S. Department of Labor, 2011).

Corporations that replaced DB plans with DC plans predominantly responded to a dynamic economic and political environment. DB plans initially evolved with the growth of the manufacturing sector in the United States. Essentially, large firms and unionized work forces bargained for these plans. But as the economy shifted to a more non-unionized, service-based environment, DC plans proliferated. Moreover, government regulation is known to be more onerous on DB plans than on DC plans. The PBGC requires firms offering DB plans to pay premiums to maintain insurance; the regulations for DB plans impose a complicated set of funding rules, limitations, and regulations pertaining to pension investment (Clark, Craig, & Wilson, 2003). As a result, shifts in union status, firm size, and regulations explain much of the trend toward DC plans.

Employees gained control of their retirement benefits through the proliferation of DC plans. They then had the ability to manage their individual retirement accounts, contribute to them, and take the accounts with them when they left their employers. With the advent of 401(K) plans, the predominant type of DC plan, workers gained the ability to direct their own investments. Employees were offered the ability to make tax-deductible employee contributions, making this investment vehicle quite attractive (Brown, 2008).

Yet, the pension landscape was not secure for retirees during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Funding rules were weak and premiums for plans covered by the PBGC were not adequate. Additionally, some employers began manipulating DB

pension plan benefits to serve corporate profitability and did not adequately provide the retirement security that workers expected. This trend is documented by Schultz (2011), who claimed that in the 1990s corporations used a variety of accounting techniques, tax incentives, and other forms of manipulation to syphon money from pension plans and serve corporate purposes. She provides an example called the “accounting effect,” where a company could reduce benefits by hundreds of millions of dollars and record the change as a profit. This practice benefited corporate executives, who were compensated by reaching certain profit targets, and shareholders, but in many cases workers and retirees, subjected to this deception and fraud, were cheated out of retirement income. Many workers did not realize they were victimized until the DB plans went into default and were turned over to the PBGC.

### The Pension Protection Act of 2006

The underfunding of pension plans continued to threaten firms’ abilities to pay retirees their pensions (Campbell, Dhaliwal, & Schwartz, 2010). Pension defaults threatened the fiscal viability of the PBGC. In 2005, when United Airlines became the largest pension default in U.S. history, pension legislation regained its prominence in Congress. In response to the pension crisis, Congress adopted the Pension Protection Act of 2006 (PPA), which is a comprehensive piece of legislation. Initiated as PL 109-280, the PPA passed the House by a vote of 279-131 on July 28, 2006. The Senate voted 93 to 5 to approve the bill on August 3 and the legislation was signed into law on August, 17, 2006 by President George W. Bush.

The PPA provided major revisions to the DB pension system, DC qualified plans, individual retirement accounts, and annuities (Landsberg, 2008). Silver-Malyska and Jenkins (2006) claimed that the focus of the law was to increase funding for DB plans through stricter fund requirements and limits on benefit increases and lump-sum distributions. The PPA made significant changes to the rules governing DC plans as well, specifically provisions that encourage automatic enrollment. The GAO (US Government Accountability Office, 2011b) reported:

In order to encourage greater participation by employees with access to an employer-sponsored pension plan, provisions of the Pension Protection Act of 2006 facilitated the adoption of automatic enrollment policies in DC plans by providing incentives for doing so and by protecting plans from fiduciary and legal liability if certain conditions are met. With such policies, new hires and existing employees who are not contributing to their 401(k) plan would be automatically enrolled and contributing unless they affirmatively take action to stop those contributions. (p. 9)

Data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) show that in 2008 about 53 percent of private-sector wage and salary workers, aged 25 - 64, worked for employers that sponsored a retirement plan, and about 44 percent participated in a plan (US Government Accountability Office, 2011b). Because the CPS does not ask respondents about the type of pension plan, the data reflect both DC and DB plans. Yet, in DB plans, coverage and participation are synonymous, whereas in DC plans participation is voluntary, resulting in varying rates of coverage and participation (Purcell, 2004). The automatic 401(k), which harnesses the power of inertia by setting the default option at each phase of the 401(k) saving cycle, is designed to improve retirement security for millions of workers without requiring them to become financial experts (Gale, Iwry, & Walters, 2009).

In sum, although the PPA made progress in improving the PBGC program and in providing automatic enrollment to employees, it did not fully correct the firms' failures to fund their pension obligations adequately. Since the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2011a) designated single-employer and multiemployer DB pension plans as high-risk in 2003 and 2009, respectively, the financial position of the PBGC remains poor. Additionally, today half of the workforce lacks access to any employer plan, requiring these individuals to rely on savings and Social Security in retirement. These issues remain a challenge. Between worries about insolvency of Social Security, the substantial underfunding of public, state, and local pension plans, high profile losses in 401(k) plans at firms like Enron, the impact of the recent economic recession, and the fact that the PBGC had an accumulated deficit of \$23 million in September,

2010, more than double the deficit of two years earlier (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011a), public confidence in the nation's retirement system is low (Brown, 2008).

### *Expanded Role of the Individual*

The GAO reported that over the last three decades, DC plans have replaced DB plans as the dominant type of private-sector employer pension plan and, by almost any measure, have taken on a primary role in how workers save for retirement (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011b). By 2007 (the most recent year with available data), DC plans comprised 93.1% of all plans and active DC participants in the private sector outnumbered those in DB plans 66.9 million to 19.4 million (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011b).

Table 1: Life Expectancy at Birth, 1970 - 2007, and Projected Life Expectancy, 2010 - 2020

Year	Total	Male	Female
1970	70.8	67.1	74.7
1980	73.7	70.0	77.4
1990	75.4	71.8	78.8
2000	76.8	74.1	79.3
2007	77.9	75.4	80.4
2010 (Projected)	78.3	75.7	80.8
2015 (Projected)	78.9	76.4	81.4
2020 (Projected)	79.5	77.1	81.9

Source: Xu, Kochanek, Murphy, & Tejada-Vera, 2010

By participating in a DC plan, individuals enjoy the benefits and flexibility of saving for retirement. DC plans provide lump-sum payments; they offer workers more liquidity before and during retirement, and they are portable, which means that workers can take their individual funds with them when they leave their company (Hacker, 2002). This type of disbursement is appealing to many employees and employers, but may present a challenge to an employee or retiree who is unfamiliar with the concepts of amortization and life expectancy, and lacks knowledge about investment options and the

associated tax implications. Ideally, it is in the best interest of the employee and retiree to invest this lump-sum so it will last through the retirement years. If an individual does not have this knowledge or foresight, the DC participant essentially faces the risk of outliving his or her pension income. In light of existing and projected increasing life expectancies (Table 1), outliving one's income is possible for many older men and women. In addition to the benefits accrued by participating in a DC plan, there are risks.

The recent economic recession created significant financial losses for many Americans. Not only did the decline in equity values decrease 401(k) accounts by 30%, many Americans lost their jobs, corporations suspended their 401(k) matches, and hardship withdrawals from 401(k) accounts ticked upward (Munnell, Kopcke, Golub-Sass, & Muldoon, 2009). Based on these recent developments, income from a DC pension plan is likely to be less than anticipated. In addition, there has been an overall decline in plan coverage and participation between 2000 and 2008 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011b). And among those who participate in a plan, mistakes are made in the management of their accounts (Munnell & Sunden, 2004). Over half fail to diversify their investments, many over-invest in company stock, and almost none re-balance their portfolios in response to their age or market returns (Munnell, 2006). Mitchell, Mottola, Utkus, and Yamaguchi (2006) found that most workers with DC plans are inattentive portfolio managers and are characterized by inertia. The declining prevalence of DB pensions that provided a guaranteed lifelong income have put much of the responsibility for preparing for retirement directly on workers (Purcell, 2009), yet there is little evidence that supports the notion that workers are equipped to handle this responsibility.

In order to make informed financial decisions about issues such as financial entitlements, pension plans, insurance matters, investment strategies, budgeting, and health care (Mackell, 2008; Skinner, 2007), Americans must be financially educated and learn to view themselves as individually responsible for their financial well-being. Those who lack financial literacy are less likely to plan for retirement, are more likely to be poor in retirement, are less likely to invest in stocks, and are

more likely to accumulate expensive debt (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2008). Lusardi and Mitchell (2007a, 2007b) also found that financial literacy is not widespread among older Americans. Only half of the respondents aged 50 and over could correctly answer questions about compound interest and inflation. Additionally, women displayed much lower levels of financial literacy, raising concerns about the ability of older women to make sound saving and investment decisions related to their retirement (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2008).

### Discussion

As the first wave of baby boomers turns 65 years of age in 2011, governmental agencies, researchers and policy makers are at a pivotal crossroad. ERISA and the PPA promised greater economic security to employees and private pension retirees. Although these promises may have been met early in the ERISA and PPA life-cycles, pension policy of the past decades has reduced the retirement security of the baby boom generation and is not capable of delivering the necessary pension protections of today's economic environment. Economic uncertainty, increased globalization, an increased non-unionized workforce, and longer life expectancies for men and women necessitate further change in the pension system. Baby boomers will be the first generation to have spent their whole careers under the regulated retirement system that exists today (Schieber, 2005), where there has been a transfer of fiscal responsibility from employers to pension plan participants. As a result, we must work to minimize financial risks older Americans will face in retirement. Following are a few practice, policy, and research considerations.

Because financial literacy is associated with retirement planning and planning has a positive relationship with retirement savings (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2007b), offering targeted financial education programs is critical, specifically among minorities and women, who face the greatest economic risk in retirement. It is unlikely that men and women will spend the time and money needed to develop the financial knowledge necessary to make informed investment decisions (Schulz, Rosenman, & Rix, 1999). Hence, workers should be trained

and educated about financial issues while in the workplace (Kim, 2008). In a study of benefit administrators at 212 corporations, Volpe, Chen, and Liu (2006) recommended that future educational programs focus on retirement planning and the basics of personal finance because employees have inadequate knowledge in these two areas. The positive impact of financial knowledge extends beyond retirement planning (Hira & Loibl, 2005), and is known to benefit the employer and employee through increased levels of productivity and decreased absenteeism (Kim & Garman, 2003). In addition to offering targeted financial education programs, comprehensive research that evaluates existing programs is needed, focusing on the long-term effects of participants' financial well-being among the diverse array of workforce populations (Kim, 2008).

Moreover, we face a major challenge understanding the relationship between behaviors and economic decision-making. The field of behavioral economics, combining research from psychology and economics, offers a unique area of developing knowledge that can help us better understand the motives, acts, thoughts, and feelings behind the behaviors related to participating in pension plans. Developing a common language and framework to promote interdisciplinary research and an exchange of knowledge (Heckman, 2011) in these two fields is recommended.

Additionally, there are a number of areas where pension policy reform is required. One area pertains to the retirement savings behaviors of individuals. For example, automatic enrollment plans and lifecycle balancing plans (Mitchell et al., 2006) anticipated increased levels of retirement savings, but they have not realized their intended impact. Tergesen (2011) reported that the total amount put into 401(k) plans increased by 13 percent since 2006, but the average savings rate has fallen in recent years. Additionally, some employers have not yet offered their employees the auto-enrollment feature because of the cost of the employer match to the organization. Life-cycle balancing plans, which balance risk and return for investors using a pre-determined time horizon, have not yet produced their intended results either. Many investors do not participate in these types of plans. Consequently, revised pension policy correcting these unintended consequences is needed.

Because the increased administration cost associated with government regulations exceeded the tax advantage of pension saving for workers at lower pay levels in small employers, many small employers terminated their DB plans over the past two decades (McGill et al., 2010). This has resulted in low participation rates for low-income workers. Congress should consider the implications of their past pension policies and promote pension policies with lower administration costs so smaller employers can offer attractive pension plans to all employees, specifically, low-income workers. Moreover, tighter federal regulations are needed to control the retirement system that has been abused by corporations, who siphoned money from pension plans to serve corporate purposes. These executives managed the system for their own benefit at the expense of the retirement security of employees and retirees.

An additional policy recommendation pertains to strengthening the PBGC. Similar to legislation introduced by Senator Kohl (D-WI) in 2009, entitled *The PBGC Governance Improvement Act of 2009* (S. 1544), future legislation is required to strengthen the limitations of the PBGC, specifically its structure and practices. The proposed legislation of 2009 amended ERISA by revising the composition and duties of the Board of Directors of the PBGC and requested that the Board form audit and investment committees to improve their effectiveness and establish a risk management position. If this type of legislation is enhanced, re-introduced, and ultimately becomes law, the improved functioning of the PBGC would be one positive step toward providing better protection to millions of workers participating in DB plans.

Policy initiatives that respond to the current economic environment, which is similar to the economic period when DB plans were first introduced, will be beneficial also. Federal policy that promotes the growth of pension plans with DB characteristics, including DB-DC hybrids, the DB(k) plan, and traditional multiemployer portable DB plans that are common among mobile workforces (Ghilarducci, 2006) may offer viable alternatives to employees and employers. For example, in DB-DC plans, employees and employers contribute to the plan, but the employee does not have the responsibility for managing it (Munnell & Quinby, 2009). In fact, in the Netherlands,

where collective risk-sharing is preferred to individual investor autonomy, hybrid pension plans (also known as “average-wage” schemes) have evolved, which effectively balance risk among employers, employees, and retirees and help maintain social solidarity among its citizens (Ponds & van Riel, 2007).

The economic environment has changed drastically over the past 40 years. The role of private pension plans is heightened because of the financial shortfalls facing Social Security and Medicare. Public policy has had a huge impact on pensions in the past and could provide greater security in the future. Legislation that protects the financial interests of workers and programs that increase financial knowledge among workers and retirees will provide a critical path toward ensuring financial well-being in late life. Additionally, pension policy should guard against financial risks and promote participation so workers of all income levels have an incentive to participate in a private pension plan. Pension reforms that improve retirement security are needed. By fixing the private pension system, confidence in the nation’s retirement system will be restored.

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# Reconciliation in a Community-Based Restorative Justice Intervention

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*Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) are among the primary means for promoting reconciliation in communities recovering from violent conflict. However, there is a lack of consensus about what reconciliation means or how it is best achieved. In a qualitative study of the first TRC in the U.S., this research interviewed victims of racial violence who participated in the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC), a community-based restorative justice intervention. Findings reveal that participants conceptualized reconciliation as a multi-leveled process, that different concepts of reconciliation influenced assessments of the success and limitations of the GTRC, and indicate how community-based restorative interventions can be improved to contribute to reconciliation in a local setting.*

*Key words: reconciliation, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, restorative justice, victims, violence, post-conflict reconstruction, peace building*

Advocates of peace and nonviolence have long sought to find solutions to the problems of war, violent conflict and oppression (Adams, 1991), from Jane Addams' peace activism during WWI (Addams, 1922) to Gandhi's nonviolent revolution in India (Hiranandani, 2008). After the Nuremberg trials following WWII, war crimes trials and tribunals became the preferred means of addressing violence in the post-conflict setting (Stover & Weinstein, 2004). However, the limitations to implementing such trials include settings with an under-developed rule of law, jurisdictional restrictions, and political

compromises necessary to establish peace. Furthermore, trials are not victim-centered and do not promote the reconciliation of conflicting groups.

Addressing these shortcomings, restorative justice has emerged as a field of theory and practice that seeks to repair the social fabric that is damaged through violence (Braithwaite, 2002). Restorative justice has been applied to child welfare (Adams & Chandler, 2004) criminal justice (Umbreit & Armour, 2011), and international conflict resolution and peace-making (Beck, Kropf, & Leonard, 2011; Moore, 2004). Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) are restorative justice-based interventions that promote the social recovery from violence through reconciliation (Androff, 2010b). Originating in Africa and Latin America, TRCs have been applied globally, most famously in South Africa in the peaceful transition from Apartheid to democracy (Hayner, 2001). The international community, state actors and community activists have implemented TRCs and other reconciliation interventions at international, national and local levels, despite a lack of consensus on reconciliation's meaning or how to best achieve it.

This study examines the first TRC to be applied in the U.S., a community-based restorative justice intervention that sought to promote reconciliation in Greensboro, North Carolina after decades of division and animosity following a 1979 incident of racial violence. Through the perspectives of victims of the violence that participated in the TRC, this research seeks to understand reconciliation in a local, community-based context. This study investigates: how victims' expectations, perceptions, and experiences with reconciliation reflect differing conceptual understandings of reconciliation; how the Greensboro TRC (GTRC) attempted to accomplish reconciliation; and the limits of reconciliation in local settings. A better understanding of what reconciliation means in a local U.S. context and the successes and limitations of the TRC in achieving reconciliation will lead to improved interventions for promoting peace and rebuilding communities recovering from violence.

### The Greensboro Truth & Reconciliation Commission

The Greensboro Massacre was an episode of racial violence that occurred on November 3, 1979 in Greensboro, North Carolina (GTRC, 2006; Magarrell & Wesley, 2008). A racially mixed group of labor and social justice activists with ties to the Communist Worker's Party had been organizing for labor rights in North Carolina. Members had gained union leadership positions inside textile mills, and began to protest an increase of Ku Klux Klan (KKK) activity in the state. Earlier in 1979, the KKK screened their recruitment film, *Birth of a Nation*, in a community theatre and the activists protested outside and burnt a confederate flag. Vowing revenge, the KKK and members of the American Nazi Party made plans to attend a future demonstration; provocative and violent rhetoric escalated between the groups. The Greensboro Police Department and the FBI had an informant in the KKK and knowledge that the groups were arming themselves in preparation for the demonstration, yet there was no law enforcement presence on the day of the rally. On November 3, 1979, the demonstrators held a social justice rally and community teach-in in a low-income, African American neighborhood in Greensboro that was to culminate in a march. KKK and American Nazi Party members arrived at the demonstration in a caravan, and a fight broke out. The KKK and Nazis fired into the crowd, killing five demonstrators and injuring ten more.

Afterwards, police arrested some victims and surveilled others (Bermanzohn, 2003; GTRC, 2006; Waller, 2002). City authorities prevented further protests, harassed the survivors, and pressured the local media to portray the violence as an equal shootout between two radical fringe groups, even though only one side suffered casualties. The victims were portrayed in the media as outside agitators without community ties. Despite video footage of the shooting, the perpetrators were acquitted in two criminal trials by all-white juries. The District Attorney responsible for prosecuting the shooters was hostile to the victims, and denied publically any difference between killing communists in Vietnam and killing them in the U.S. Distrust of the city government grew among the low-income and African American residents, as many suspected

that law enforcement agencies were complicit in the violence. The fallout increased racial tensions and a climate of animosity that negatively affected life in Greensboro (Wheaton, 1987).

The survivors dedicated themselves to pursuing justice for the dead and the truth about the violence (Bermanzohn, 2003; Waller, 2002). In 1985 they won a federal civil suit against the Greensboro Police Department and the perpetrators. The settlement launched the Greensboro Justice Fund, a civil rights organization promoting democracy and racial tolerance in the U.S. South. One survivor founded the Beloved Community Center, which advocates for criminal justice and education reform, campaigns for the homeless, and has organized K-Mart workers.

The idea of reinvestigating the Greensboro Massacre was discussed at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the violence by survivors and community leaders impressed by the success of the South African TRC. With philanthropic funding and NGO consultants, they decided to apply a similar model to Greensboro. In 2004 the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC) was created with a mandate to examine the causes and consequences of November, 3, 1979 and to promote dialogue and reconciliation. In an effort to ensure that the process would be objective in its investigation and independent from the victims, the organizers conducted an inclusive selection process to choose the seven Commissioners that would lead the GTRC.

While many of the participants in the GTRC were victims and concerned community members, Greensboro police personnel, lawyers from the criminal trials, and a few of the perpetrators came forward to participate (GTRC, 2006; Williams, 2009). The Mayor and the City Council of Greensboro declined to participate and actually opposed the process, even though all the African American City Council members voted in favor of supporting the GTRC. Those who were opposed to the GTRC, including the city administration, claimed that Greensboro's racial problems were in the past and irrelevant to contemporary life, and that focusing on old issues would harm Greensboro's image. Further, the reaction of the wider community was mixed; there was a lot of support in the form of donations and volunteers, but many in Greensboro were

confused by, ignorant or critical of the GTRC for being overly focused upon the victims.

Without any governmental support, the grassroots GTRC did not enjoy subpoena powers to compel the disclosure of records or the testimony of individuals. The GTRC took voluntary statements from approximately 200 people, including victims, perpetrators, and community members, and held three public hearings on the events leading up to the violence, the events of November 3, 1979, and the consequences of the violence. They consulted the records they could obtain, however, many documents released under the Freedom of Information Act were significantly redacted. The GTRC concluded in 2006 with the release of the Final Report, a comprehensive account of their findings and recommendations for the community.

As an intervention, the GTRC faced significant constraints of funding, time, and authority that limited the scope of its work. Functioning as a grassroots community-based initiative without governmental support, the GTRC operated on a shoestring budget and with a small staff supported primarily by volunteers. By design, the GTRC was a time-limited intervention; the Commissioners were empanelled in 2004 and the Final Report was released in 2006. While it accomplished a lot in its two years, its work was also constrained by these time limits. The third limit on the GTRC's functioning was the lack of sanction and support from the City of Greensboro. In addition to the technical limitations of not having subpoena power to compel participation and obtain records, this may have harmed the appearance of the GTRC's legitimacy for some in the Greensboro community and contributed to the relatively low turnout of perpetrators that participated in the GTRC. That the GTRC was organized and completed its work in the face of these constraints is remarkable.

## Reconciliation

### *Definitions of Reconciliation*

Reconciliation is as popular a concept as it is unclear. Connotations of social harmony have led to unrealistic expectations of friendly relationships between warring parties (Kumar, 1999; Stover & Weinstein, 2004) and the goal of reconciliation has been dismissed as an ephemeral and spiritual

but impractical goal (Boraine, 2004; Tutu, 1999). Despite this conceptual confusion, the term abounds in social science and post-conflict projects around the world.

Reconciliation's etymology from Latin means 'coming together,' and its main usage has been theological (Boraine, 2004; Kumar, 1999; Minow, 1998; Tutu, 1999). Most definitions of reconciliation in post-conflict settings involve communication and mutual tolerance between opposing groups (Minow, 1998). Reconciliation has been defined as the "mutually conciliatory accommodation between antagonistic or formerly antagonistic persons or groups" (Kriesberg, 2007, p. 2), where each side accepts the other's "right to co-exist" (Kumar, 1999, p. 1). The peaceful co-existence of both victims and perpetrators of violence is the goal of reconciliation, achieved through normalized relations (Rosenberg, 1994) that involve both "restoring dignity to victims" and "dealing respectfully with those who assisted or were complicit with the violence" (Minow, 1998, p. 23). Stover and Weinstein (2004) prefer social reconstruction or reclamation to describe restoring safety, rejecting wrongdoing, and rebuilding communities after violence.

The willingness to 'put up with' people or groups that one previously was openly hostile towards is an essential ingredient of reconciliation (Cox & Pawar, 2006; Gibson, 2004; Stover & Weinstein, 2004). Increased cooperation and mutual tolerance through intergroup engagement and dialogue is based upon the social contact hypothesis of intergroup relations, which holds that the more people interact, the more likely they are to tolerate and accept each other. Applying this concept to post-Apartheid South Africa, Gibson (2004) found that "inter-racial reconciliation is heavily dependent upon interracial contacts" (p. 20).

Reconciliation does not necessarily entail forgiveness, which is often criticized as an unrealistic goal following violence (Kumar, 1999; Minow, 1998; Tutu, 1999). Reconciliation interventions and TRCs sometimes lead to forgiveness, such as when a former Apartheid death squad commander was forgiven by the widows of his victims after he participated in the South African TRC and apologized (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003). Despite a significant social psychology literature on interpersonal conflict and forgiveness (Enright, 2001), little

attention has been paid to the meaning and process of reconciliation among victims of violence (Androff, 2010a).

### *Approaches to Reconciliation*

Varying approaches differ on how to best achieve reconciliation, ranging from retributive justice, restorative justice, political, and social justice perspectives. Retributive justice advocates maintain that reconciliation is a by-product of the rule of law, and view criminal prosecutions as the best route to achieving reconciliation (Stover & Weinstein, 2004). Restorative justice emphasizes repairing the social fabric through mediation and dialogue between victims and offenders (Braithwaite, 2002; Umbreit & Armour, 2011), and views reconciliation as a process of re-humanization necessary to reverse the negative stereotypes and dehumanization that accompanies violent conflict (Androff, 2012b; Ajdukovic & Corkalo, 2004; Halpern & Weinstein, 2004). The political approach defines reconciliation as an exercise in state-building and democratization (Gibson, 2004). Restoring democratic discourse, supporting pluralism and diversity, adopting peaceful dispute resolution and joint participation in communal life are linked to strengthening civil society, open elections, and reforming institutions. Those who argue for compensatory or distributive justice hold that reconciliation would be best achieved through reparations and structural changes to the economic system (Minow, 1998). This perspective recognizes the role of inequality and structural violence in perpetuating physical violence.

Combining these perspectives and drawing from Bronfenbrenner and community psychology, Stover and Weinstein (2004) have proposed an ecological model of social reconstruction and reconciliation. This systems approach echoes social work's paradigm of the person-in-environment perspective (Payne, 2005). Stover and Weinstein (2004) define their ecological model as "a process that reaffirms and develops a society and its institutions based on shared values and human rights" and includes legal, education, economic and intergroup engagement interventions to address the factors that led to the conflict at the levels of individuals, communities and the state (p. 5).

*Reconciliation as a Multi-leveled Process*

Research by Stover and Weinstein (2004) reveals that social reconstruction and reconciliation is a slow process, occurs on multiple levels (individual, community, and state) and is affected by social identity, collective memory, and intergroup interaction. Daly and Sarkin (2007) also contend that reconciliation occurs on multiple levels ranging from individual to the international. Androff (2010a) developed a typology of interpersonal reconciliation that includes cognitive-affective reconciliation (changes within individuals), behavioral reconciliation (a gesture made by one person towards another), and social reconciliation (acknowledgment of another's behavioral reconciliation resulting in transformed relationships). Reconciliation also can occur within communities, as former perpetrators and victims learn to coexist, and within nations, when people are reconciled with the state following repression and persecution. International reconciliation refers to peaceful relations between nations following conflict.

In addition to occurring on multiple levels, reconciliation is also thought to be a process that unfolds in stages (Maynard, 1999; Stover & Weinstein, 2004). Most stage models of reconciliation and social recovery from violence include the steps of establishing safety, establishing culturally appropriate modes of bereavement, restoring trust and morality, and facilitating dialogue and education. Establishing safety is paramount; reconciliation initiatives often fail if the violent conflict is ongoing (Hayner, 2001). Bereavement entails cultural mourning practices of ceremony, art, dance, music, and drama that contribute to healing (Minow, 1998). Rebuilding trust and morality includes re-humanizing victims and perpetrators, promoting empathy, and creating a historical record of the injustices (Androff, 2012b). Dialogue and education foster critical reflection on the causes and consequences of the conflict, and work to cultivate respect and prevent future violence (Freedman et al., 2004).

*TRCs' Contribution to Reconciliation*

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) are restorative justice interventions that investigate human rights abuses, political repression and violent conflict, and are one of

the most popular post-conflict interventions for repairing the social fabric (Androff, 2010b). The truth-seeking function of TRCs is a narrative process that aims to add victims' stories to the historical record (Androff, 2012a). The reconciliation function of TRCs seeks to repair the relationships between victims, perpetrators and the community. TRCs promote reconciliation by bringing together perpetrators, victims, and community members who may have been witnesses or supporters of various sides; all are given the opportunity to share their experiences and engage in dialogue. TRCs also contribute to reconciliation through public hearings, community mediation ceremonies, reparations and restitution. These strategies often incorporate traditional or indigenous models of community reconciliation and restoration by combining local culture, religion, and conflict resolution techniques into TRCs. The South African TRC emphasized an African concept of collectivity, *ubuntu* (Hayner, 2001), the Timor-Leste TRC incorporated animist shamans into local reconciliation ceremonies (Androff, 2008), and the Greensboro TRC worked with Christian churches, labor and civil rights leaders (Magarrell & Wesley, 2008).

TRCs must operate in the wider context of social reconstruction; the social recovery from violence, injustice, and repression is a large context for post-conflict interventions. TRCs do not constitute a comprehensive intervention for achieving reconciliation, and should be one tool among many. The GTRC did not result in total reconciliation in Greensboro, yet was able to contribute to reconciliation in important ways. TRCs are best understood as limited mechanisms that can contribute to a range of broader reconstruction efforts and can accomplish certain goals under certain conditions. If these are clarified, TRCs can be successful interventions in an ecological framework of post-conflict reconstruction. TRCs play a significant role with other social reconstruction efforts, including legal trials, economic development, education reform, as well as cultural practices that promote community bereavement, the re-humanization of social groups, trust building between groups, and peaceful conflict resolution.

## Methods

This study employed a qualitative design to explore the perspectives of victims of violence who participated in the GTRC ( $n = 17$ ). This is the first study of this population and their experiences of reconciliation, therefore, an exploratory, qualitative design is appropriate. In-depth, open-ended interviews allowed for a detailed investigation of victims' perspectives on reconciliation. An interview guide was developed for this research to examine the theme of reconciliation that elicited background information, such as respondents' demographics and socio-economic status. Respondents were asked what reconciliation means to them, if and how they felt the GTRC addressed reconciliation, how successful the GTRC was at bringing about reconciliation, and what the limits of reconciliation were in this context. Respondents were encouraged to express anything they felt was relevant as well as both positive and negative experiences with the GTRC. Contact information for victims who participated in the GTRC was obtained from the GTRC Research Director.

Each participant was first contacted with a letter describing the research project, and then contacted a week later by phone for follow up. After securing informed consent, participants were offered a small amount of compensation for their time, \$20. Purposive sampling identified seventeen victims of the 1979 violence who participated in the GTRC. Interviewing other victims of the violence who choose not to participate in the intervention was beyond the scope of this study. Perpetrators and community members were not included in this sample, in order to isolate victim's experiences with reconciliation as a result of their participation in the GTRC. The absence of perpetrators' perspectives is a limitation of this research and to understanding the GTRC's contribution to reconciliation, however, understanding victims' experiences of reconciliation is central to the functioning of TRCs. For the purpose of this research, the category 'victim' refers to the survivors of the Greensboro Massacre, including those shot and stabbed, widows and children of those killed, and others present who witnessed the violence and could have been injured. 'Participation in the GTRC' refers to victims who gave a personal statement in a private interview to a GTRC

staffer, delivered testimony before a public hearing, and attended GTRC events such as planning meetings, the seating ceremony of the Commissioners, and the Final Report release ceremony.

The sample was primarily comprised of the fourteen activists at the 1979 demonstration as well as three of their children. In 1979 the demonstrators were in their 20s and 30s, and their children were either very young or born afterwards; the oldest of this group was 9. The children, who refer to themselves as the Second Generation, were included because they met the sample inclusion criteria as victims and participants; the oldest was present at the demonstration and the others grew up deeply affected by the violence as their parents struggled through the aftermath and each gave a statement to the GTRC or testified before a public hearing. At the time of the interviews, the survivors were in their 50s and 60s, and their children in their 20s and 30s. Participants are randomly labeled A-Q to protect confidentiality. The sample was nearly even between genders; nine were female and eight male. Respondents self-identified their ethnicity; seven described themselves as White and non-Jewish, four described themselves as White and Jewish, and four identified as African American. Twelve of the respondents held graduate degrees, two bachelor's degrees, and three had completed high school but had not attended college. Interviews averaged two hours, and were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software. A hermeneutical approach and thematic coding were used to analyze data to uncover the meaning of reconciliation to victims. Triangulation was employed to verify findings by checking with GTRC staff, accessing the GTRC archive of statements from the public hearings, and by accessing local media, such as newspapers and blogs.

### Victims' Perspectives on Reconciliation

Respondents' descriptions of their perceptions and experiences with reconciliation reveal insights about what reconciliation means in a local community context. These findings include respondents' conceptions of reconciliation as a multi-leveled process, their views of the GTRC's efforts to address reconciliation, and reservations about its limits. The GTRC

was a complex intervention, and respondents had positive and negative assessments of its outcomes. Despite frustration with its limitations, respondents noted its value, "[the GTRC] is part of a flawed, but important, process ... people just have to recognize it for what it is" (B).

### *Defining Reconciliation*

When asked about their conceptions of reconciliation, respondents echoed the lack of consensus in the literature on a specific definition. Respondent H summed up the problem: "It's hard to know [what reconciliation is] because we have so little of it." However, respondents identified two key features of reconciliation: that it is multi-leveled and is a long term process.

*The multiple levels of reconciliation.* Respondents universally stated that reconciliation occurs on different levels. There can be many acts of reconciliation. "It's not a wholesale, single thing" (C). One respondent explained, "I think genuine reconciliation has taken place on a couple levels" (G). The levels along which reconciliation occurs were identified as micro and macro reconciliation. Micro-level reconciliation refers to changes in and between individuals. Macro-level reconciliation refers to changes between groups of people (perpetrators and victims, GTRC supporters and critics, African American and White communities, other minority-majority groups, and different age and class groups). It is unclear if macro-level reconciliation is the result of many cases of individual reconciliations, or if it is more than the accretion of reconciliation on the micro level. Macro-level reconciliation, played out on a larger scale than micro-level reconciliation, relates to ongoing efforts in the community to further the GTRC's work. Macro reconciliation involves "engagement" or getting diverse segments of the community to come together and participate in the GTRC. One example of macro reconciliation in the GTRC was that participants were made up of diverse age groups, specifically many young people (mainly college students) and older adults (mainly members of church congregations).

*The long term process of reconciliation.* In addition to the multi-level concept, most respondents described reconciliation as something that happens over a long period of time. In the

literature, reconciliation is most often conceived of as a process over time in multiple stages. Respondents indicated that the GTRC was a “really powerful first step” and “a good first step” (I) toward reconciliation, though there is still a long way to go. “I think steps towards [reconciliation] were achieved. I think it’s an ongoing process but I think [the GTRC] is definitely a good first couple steps towards it” (G). Thus respondents were positive but cautious, often referring to the GTRC’s contribution to reconciliation as the first stage of a longer process which required more work, “fundamentally I think this is like the first tiny step in a bigger process,” and “I think it was just more or less a beginning of acknowledging some injustice” (H). Respondents indicated that the GTRC began the process of reconciliation by acknowledging diverse perspectives and important issues, and by promoting dialogue between these groups.

Respondents were cautious in assessing the GTRC’s contribution to reconciliation in Greensboro, which revealed different perspectives on reconciliation. “I think that they helped it move along. It wasn’t like a magic thing, like one day [there is the GTRC] and the next day [there is reconciliation]” (E). Respondents also had varying ideas of what the GTRC could achieve. “I don’t think all of the social healing could come about through the truth and reconciliation process, but I think that’s an important part of it. I’m glad it’s happened” (H). As such, most respondents talked about wanting to see continued work towards reconciliation. “I hope the process will be ongoing because that will be [the GTRC’s] true legacy—if it can be promoted and built upon. Otherwise [reconciliation will be] very limited” (H). This respondent saw the GTRC’s contribution to reconciliation as part of a broader struggle for social justice.

I view this from the perspective of the struggle overall—it’s not a conclusive phase of the struggle, but an example of what can be done to move the struggle forward on the road towards making those changes that we want to see. (H)

Another respondent voiced that the full meaning of the GTRC will be revealed in the future, and determined by

activism. "I think it goes on. If there's going to be any meaning for Greensboro, it's got to come out in community organization and struggle" (M). Ongoing efforts at social change that stem from a TRC reflect a vision of reconciliation that includes social justice. This view necessitates that the full measure of community reconciliation may not be revealed until long after the completion of the GTRC.

### *Addressing Reconciliation*

Nine respondents felt that the GTRC successfully addressed reconciliation, and achieved more reconciliation than they had expected was possible. "There's been genuine reconciliation that has gone on, that would not have gone on" (G). Some were surprised at what the GTRC was able to do, "it was, in many ways, more than what I expected" (B) and "my expectations were exceeded" (I). Another respondent said, "I'm delighted with how it came out. I think [the GTRC] really did just such a good job" (I). Eight respondents had a more mixed perspective on what the GTRC accomplished. "The Truth and Reconciliation process exceeded my expectations and in some ways, I felt let down, so it was both. It was both more and less than I had hoped" (B). The primary factors that respondents identified as facilitating the GTRC's success in addressing reconciliation were the structure of the intervention and the stance of neutrality and independence of the community-based organization.

Respondent C believed that the structure of the GTRC promoted reconciliation. "There was an atmosphere conducive to people hearing one another's truth, maybe hearing it for the first time" and stated that "many acts of reconciliation happened in the course of the Commission's work" (C). She added that the GTRC "invited reconciliation," that the process had "reconciliation built into it." Hearing people's stories, especially listening to the perpetrators, promoted reconciliation. As C noted, "If you're going to sit and talk, not be shooting at one another, furthermore, you're going to listen; you're going to listen respectfully. People are going to have their say," which would "promote reconciliation." Another commented that "I never thought black people and Klan members could [both participate], but it's being done. It's honest, truthful and healing ... it's a good process" (D).

Others emphasized how the neutrality of the GTRC contributed to its success at reconciliation. The GTRC was organized so that the victims would not be in control of the process; this distance earned the GTRC objectivity. People described the GTRC as "an open process," and as being "transparent" and thus credible, because "it does draw on so many different people" (B, I). This independence for the victims was sometimes "frustrating" when some respondents felt that "[the victims] weren't having as loud a voice as we wanted" or that the Commissioners and other participants "were saying things that I disagreed with," yet many agreed that this was "really a mark of its value," and "that's part of why it's so good, because they are so independent and can say things that we wouldn't agree with." Respondent I added that this ensured that the GTRC wasn't "just the mouthpiece for Greensboro Justice Fund or former members of Communist Workers Party or the Second Generation [of survivors]." Despite the frustrations, many felt that the GTRC "really was beyond us and I think that that's part of what made its success." Another person indicated that the GTRC's objectivity was ensured by refraining from attacking city agencies. "I think they sought reconciliation honestly, sincerely. They didn't go around trying to bash the police" (H).

### *Limits of Reconciliation*

Respondents indicated that the GTRC's constraints and the overall lack of participation by perpetrators limited the GTRC's ability to achieve reconciliation. Respondent F felt that reconciliation was a great idea. "I really love the idea that you can make [reconciliation] happen, have some healing and get to a better understanding of what went on," but was poorly executed. "I've not been overly impressed with how this [turned out]."

Disappointment with the GTRC reflected the conception of reconciliation as a long-term process. Eight respondents were disappointed at the reconciliation achieved by the GTRC. "I expected more," one stated. Another noted, "there is still a long ways to go" (A, G). Many respondents were skeptical of the GTRC's contribution to overall reconciliation in Greensboro, "I had low expectations from the start. I wanted it to work, I thought it was a great idea, and I was glad someone else was

trying, but I wasn't going to put any of my time into it" (F). "I think it is a deafening silence there [on how the Commission addressed reconciliation]," leading to a negative assessment, "[I] think the impact of the GTRC upon the community has been minimal" (F).

Some respondents felt the absence of participation by some perpetrators hampered reconciliation from the outset. "I think the Commission was limited because the lack of involvement from the other side," and "the lack of participation by the perpetrators makes it difficult for it to be a complete reconciliation" (A). Respondent J added, "I would have liked to have heard more from the people who didn't like us ... it would have been nice to have more Klans and Nazis there just to hear what they had to say." This was disappointing to some respondents, due to the efforts of the GTRC to reach out to "the Klansmen, the Nazis, the police department, the public officials in Greensboro," which "offered them the opportunity to come forward and tell their story" (H). This was a common complaint raised in terms of achieving a wider reconciliation. "For the most part they didn't accept that opportunity, the fact that they didn't accept it probably hurt reconciliation more than helped it" (H).

Respondents were mixed in their views of the perpetrators that did participate; their differences were a result of their conceptions of reconciliation. Since most of the perpetrators didn't participate at all, and the few that did only did so in a very circumscribed manner, the majority of respondents were disappointed with this aspect of the GTRC. Several reasons were cited for this; chief among them was a lack of good-faith participation of the KKK and Nazi perpetrators, who did participate in the GTRC but stopped short of acknowledging their own failures and apologizing. Respondent B described prerequisites for reconciliation, "there has to be an acknowledgement of wrong-doing and sincere intent to be or do differently." They were not satisfied here. "I didn't hear a lot of that. Most of the people who came forward weren't being candid, weren't being forthright and didn't honestly want to acknowledge their wrong-doing." They shared their perception of what the perpetrators said. "We heard folks who said, 'I wish I hadn't come that day because what happened was I

ended up in jail for a day.” Others said, “I didn’t know there was going to be violence.” These statements were made “by people who brought the guns or organized the guns and knew there was going to be violence.” These respondents’ evaluation of the situation was that “saying, ‘I didn’t think that there was going to be violence,’ doesn’t lay a basis for the word reconciliation,” and this prevented “conditions for what I would see as real reconciliation which would have to come from some folks who had done some real soul searching.” Victims also described what they would have liked to hear from the perpetrators instead: “I did plan violence. I did come because I was planning to kill people and these are the people who I talked to and I really, really wish I hadn’t brought that gun and killed those people.” If they had heard statements to that effect, more of the victims would have been open to reconciliation, “then you can talk to me about reconciliation. In the absence of that it’s hard to imagine what that would really look like, for me” (M).

This failure to fully participate and engage in the GTRC frustrated many and constituted a significant obstacle to reconciliation that they were not able to overcome. “They’ve been able to obscure the situation for decades, for a generation and a half. So, on the subject of forgiveness, forget it. On the subject of reconciliation, forget it” (O). B felt that this prevented the GTRC from working as it was intended, because “the process itself didn’t lend itself to [reconciliation].”

Some respondents gave specific reasons why they thought the GTRC’s efforts at reconciliation were limited, including media relations, outreach efforts, and insufficient neutrality. Respondent F was impressed by the only perpetrator who apologized to two of the victims, and raised the question of “why wasn’t [the apology] a marquee story for our side? Not just for our side, but for the whole TRC process?” This failure to publicize even modest successes was seen as a limiting factor to drawing attention to the reconciliation efforts and a wider community impact “that was pretty powerful, but I never heard anybody make anything of it. I never heard anybody on our side say, ‘list that as a good thing.’” This kind of good press, this respondent felt, could have provided justification for the process. “You can say that’s worth it right there, just to

have even one guy who was so involved and a shooter [make an apology]."

Respondent J felt that reconciliation would have been better served through greater outreach to "more people who were not so happy with us" and if the GTRC had "some kind of follow up with ... people that don't like us." Others feared the victim-centered approach of the GTRC prevented perpetrators from being fully engaged in the process. Respondent F criticized the attitude of the GTRC as "'Oh, sure, we're going to apologize for what it's clear we did wrong, but basically, we were the good guys and they were the bad guys.'" This was seen as another obstacle to reconciliation, especially discouraging more perpetrator participation. "I never quite understood how that proposition was going to be inviting to anyone else, or how it was going to deal with people in the middle—it's a question for how TRC's can ever work."

Other respondents described victims that chose not to participate in the GTRC and who criticized the process. "There's been criticism ... that this is no place for a TRC." This person "hated the idea," of a TRC, "thought it was horrible," and felt that "to even say it in the same breath as South Africa was an abomination." Respondent J explained this person's perspective by saying, "[one of the demonstrators] is very angry about the history and doesn't [think the conflict was legitimate enough to warrant] a TRC."

Respondents cited confusion over the meaning of reconciliation, its nebulous nature and idealistic intentions, as preventing the GTRC from having more of an impact. Respondent F complained, "I haven't seen an explicit discussion about how you define it, or the process exactly for getting there? It seemed a little vague." This seemed especially true as people struggled to understand how reconciliation works. "From what I've seen, the plan is: if everybody tells their story, they'll feel better and they won't be so divided or angry, and there'll be some sort of implied reconciliation" (F). Four people questioned reconciliation as a realistic goal in a community characterized by power inequalities, emphasizing the economic disparities between the two sides. "It's not a question of two [equal] sides in conflict, [but] one side's got power and the other is side trying to defend itself" (K).

## Discussion and Implications

The GTRC is an example of the popularity and proliferation of reconciliation initiatives, however it is distinct from previous TRCs as a grassroots-organized and community-based intervention at a local level in a relatively small community context. The victims' lived experiences of recovering from violence and grappling with a community reconciliation intervention contribute to the clarification of the concept and especially its limitations. However, this research is limited by several methodological factors. The respondents were only interviewed after their participation in the GTRC. In the future, baseline data collected prior to the intervention should be used to assess participants' expectations of reconciliation interventions and combined with follow up studies. Also, this study only interviewed the victims that participated in the intervention; this was a self-selected population. Data from the victims that elected to not participate could shed light on further limitations of the GTRC and how it was perceived in the wider community. Most significantly, research with the perpetrators that did and did not participate is necessary to enlarge the picture of the GTRC; future research should attend to all affected populations in order to assess reconciliation interventions.

Respondents confirmed the two basic elements of reconciliation found in the literature—that reconciliation is both a multi-leveled and a long term process. Respondents distinguished reconciliation between individuals from reconciliation between groups, within community, and with the local city government. They stressed that reconciliation would be a long term process in Greensboro, and any contribution that the GTRC may have made is only the first step which needs to be consolidated and extended. Beyond these core elements, respondents expressed differences in their conceptualizations and thus experiences of reconciliation. For respondents who were generally satisfied with the GTRC, the process contributed to reconciliation and they accepted that reconciliation was a practical goal in this setting. They felt that reconciliation could be accomplished through dialogue; the process of getting people to talk and respectfully listening to the other side was seen as instrumental to establishing a measure of

reconciliation.

However, as noted in the literature, vague definitions and unrealistic expectations of reconciliation can confound the implementation of reconciliation projects. Some respondents had difficulty with the concept and were troubled with the ill-defined nature of reconciliation; others questioned its appropriateness as a goal. These respondents' understanding of reconciliation is linked to the goal of social justice and the transformation of society. It is likely that these expectations were too high and exceeded the GTRC's capacity to address and remedy the structural inequalities and injustices of social life in the U.S. South. Future TRCs may improve the intervention by better defining reconciliation. Clarifying participants' expectations of reconciliation may lead to more realistic views of the outcomes. If the process is defined more narrowly, people and communities may get more out of it. Greater specificity about the anticipated goals will lend itself to increased publicity and outreach campaigns, and may make reconciliation efforts more inviting to perpetrators. TRCs are limited interventions that can overpromise their potential; the very name of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission may contribute to unrealistic expectations by proposing that 'truth' exists and 'reconciliation' is achievable. When linked to social justice, the ideal of reconciliation is better thought of as a valuable process than an attainable destination. The concrete work of increasing mutual tolerance by facilitating dialogue and respectful listening between antagonistic groups is achievable and is a contribution of the GTRC. The willingness to coexist with others in a diverse society is a building block of peace and social stability; in this way, TRCs and reconciliation interventions can further the goal of peace and nonviolent social movements.

The City of Greensboro's opposition to the GTRC was another obstacle to reconciliation in the community. Some respondents felt that reconciliation was unrealistic in the absence of those in positions of power in the city. This relates to the view held by some respondents of the role of social change as an element of reconciliation. For these respondents, dialogue that does not lead to social change does not constitute steps toward reconciliation. Most TRCs have been borne of political transitions; there was no such transfer of power or change in the city administration in Greensboro. This hinders the GTRC's

ability to contribute to social change and limits its impact to the grassroots level. However, some respondents also felt that the GTRC had a low community impact, and that further publicity and outreach efforts would have enhanced its reception by the general population of Greensboro. Additional resources could have amplified the GTRC's publicity and outreach efforts. More attention to framing reconciliation initiatives to maximize community response and participation could improve future interventions. The GTRC's lack of official state sanction is unique among TRCs, however, there were benefits associated with this independence from government. State implemented reconciliation efforts have been criticized as instruments of political expediency. Some respondents found that the lack of City support increased the moral authority of the GTRC. It was a grassroots community sanctioned project—an exercise in direct democracy and an example of what citizens can accomplish despite resistance from the government. That even a few perpetrators participated is testament to the power of moral suasion of community-based projects.

The GTRC's success at meeting or exceeding some of the respondents' expectations of reconciliation and engaging some former perpetrators and victims must be weighed against the lack of participation by the city and majority of perpetrators. Their absence was the largest obstacle to reconciliation identified by respondents. In addition, the contribution of the few perpetrators who did participate was deemed insufficient by some respondents, but not all. They viewed the failure of the perpetrators to take responsibility for their harmful actions as a major impediment to reconciliation. Reflecting on the failure to engage the majority of perpetrators, one respondent raised the question of how the GTRC could have attracted more participation from perpetrators. A few previous TRCs were endowed with legal authority to grant perpetrators the participation incentive of amnesty or to compel participation; as a grassroots organization, these measures were beyond the scope of the GTRC. Further, compelling testimony may lead to dishonest or self-serving narratives, which may hinder reconciliation in a different manner. Although the GTRC did implement an inclusive process that invited the participation of all community stakeholders, the goal of full community engagement was not fulfilled. This indicates that reconciliation will be incomplete

when all sides do not participate in such interventions.

As an approach to reconciliation, the GTRC was squarely in the restorative justice perspective. In Greensboro, the retributive justice approach of prosecutions had failed. The political approach was absent from the GTRC without the involvement of the city authorities. The social justice approach of attending to structural inequality and reparations was beyond the scope of the GTRC. The need for reparations was perhaps lessened due to the 1985 civil suit settlement received by the victims. However, respondents did report that the GTRC was connected to ongoing efforts to bring about social change in Greensboro. With its restorative justice approach, the GTRC facilitated the social contact and engagement of perpetrators and victims through dialogue and listening to each other's perspectives. This process restored dignity to the victims and promoted mutual tolerance and peaceful coexistence. As the respondents remarked, the feat of having the Klan and demonstrators in the same room without violence was significant. Despite their differences, both sides were willing to 'put up' with each other.

A nuanced appreciation for the GTRC's contributions to reconciliation makes apparent the need to supplement reconciliation efforts with other community interventions working for social justice. Recalling the ecological model of social recovery from violence, a multiplicity of interventions is necessary to rebuild communities. The GTRC has begun the work of reconciliation in Greensboro, but the project of social transformation cannot end there.

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“Where Are My Rights?”  
Compromised Citizenship in  
Mixed-Status Marriage  
A Research Note

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*Immigration policy has shifted its focus from family reunification to strict enforcement of “illegal” immigration. It has become much more difficult for U.S. citizens to adjust their non-citizen spouses’ legal status, especially spouses who are undocumented. This paper examines the vulnerabilities of female U.S. citizens married or partnered with undocumented Mexican men. Findings challenge the simplistic notion that marriage with a U.S. citizen creates automatic legalization for undocumented individuals and highlights the creation of a second class citizenry for native-born partners. This study argues that punitive immigration law and policies have profound negative implications for the lives of U.S. citizens.*

*Key words: mixed-status families, immigration policy, undocumented immigrants, citizenship*

Most people in the United States assume incorrectly that marriage between a non-citizen and a U.S. citizen creates a seamless pathway to legalization for the immigrant partner with few consequences for the citizen spouse. However, the complex lives of U.S. citizens married to undocumented immigrants (i.e., mixed-status couples) rarely enter the public’s consciousness. What little we do know about mixed-status couples is often mischaracterized by the media. Films such as *The Proposal*, a box office smash in the summer of 2009 reduce

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the public's understanding of marriage between citizens and those without legal status to an easy and crass tactic to gain citizenship (Mandeville Films, 2009). By and large, the general public is unaware and misinformed of how the emergence of exclusionary immigration policies, with a focus on cracking down on "illegal" immigration, also marginalizes U.S. citizen spouses.

Similarly, the experiences of mixed-status couples have also been omitted from scholarly research. Although academics have examined intermarriage between U.S. citizens and "legal" immigrants (Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2000), no work provides first-hand, qualitative accounts of adult citizens impacted by their partners' undocumented legal status. Fix and Zimmerman (2001) describe demographic profiles of mixed-status families but mainly focus on immigrant couples with citizen children. However, they conclude that family members who have legal rights become "second class citizens." These findings frame the unforeseen loss of benefits experienced by citizens partnered with undocumented individuals.

Although there is a lack of scholarly work examining mixed-status couples, some existing research draws attention to the negative impact of restrictive immigration policies on the lives of U.S. citizens. Bhuyan (2010) analyzes how strict mandates to verify citizenship and identity for public assistance inherently disenfranchise both immigrants and citizens. Attempts to block undocumented immigrants from accessing Medicaid actually reduces the number of eligible immigrants and citizens receiving benefits and creates particular hardships for low-income groups, especially citizen children in single-parent homes.

The benefits of citizenship for children are often dependent upon their parents' legal status, even when the children are citizens (Van Hook & Balistreri, 2006). Recent immigration policies targeting undocumented immigrants have created a decline in well-being for immigrant children, many of whom are U.S. citizens. Androff et al. (2011) point out that children of undocumented parents experience "economic insecurity, barriers to education, poor health outcomes, arrest and deportation of family members, discrimination, and trauma and harm

to the community" (p. 78). Examining the vulnerabilities of mixed-status couples can strengthen our understanding of the experiences of children when they are part of the family, but it is vital that adults involved be studied as well.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the experiences of native-born citizen women who are married or partnered with undocumented Mexican men. This research highlights the ways in which citizens' personal lives directly challenge community misinterpretations and demonstrates the intricate connections between the rights of undocumented immigrants and the rights of U.S. citizens. This study argues that punitive immigration laws have profound negative implications for the private lives of U.S. citizens partnered with undocumented immigrants.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, immigration policy has been framed as a national security issue (Hing, 2006), shifting its focus from family reunification to enforcement of "illegal" immigration. Thus, it has become much more difficult to sponsor an undocumented spouse. Prior to the terrorist attacks, undocumented immigrants married to citizens had an easier time becoming legal residents and were allowed to pay a fine; however, this option is no longer available. Individuals who enter the country "illegally" rather than overstay a visa face the harshest penalties. Astonishing to many couples, "illegal" immigrants who entered the country without inspection must return to their country of origin if they hope to obtain legal residence (which is still not guaranteed). Particularly damaging for mixed-status couples, Congress has decided that individuals with more than 180 days of unlawful presence are now subject to a three-year bar, while individuals with more than a year of unlawful presence are subject to a ten-year bar (Mercer, 2008, pp. 300-301). Even more punitively, individuals with more than one year of unlawful presence who are deported from the United States or who chose to leave and then return "illegally" are permanently barred (Cruz, 2010). Inadvertently, anti-immigrant policies centered on enforcement of "illegal" immigration create a vulnerable social position for citizens.

Filing an extreme hardship waiver is currently the only option U.S. citizens have to adjust their spouses' legal status

(along with the immigrant spouse traveling abroad) (Mercer, 2008). The undocumented spouse must “prove that a denial would cause an extreme hardship, rather than a normal hardship, to the immigrant’s citizen or lawful permanent resident spouse ...” (p. 305). Separation from spouses and children is not considered an extreme hardship. The lack of consistent definitions, the discretionary nature of hardship waiver decisions, and the inability to appeal decisions creates a shaky position for families. If a waiver is denied, the “illegal” spouse will be forced to leave the United States. Naturally, these risks prevent many couples from even initiating adjustment of undocumented status, as “living in the United States without status is a lesser moral harm than abandoning one’s family and home” (Cruz, 2010, p. 13).

Low-income citizens are at a distinct disadvantage when attempting to gain legal status for an undocumented spouse. Sponsoring citizen spouses must document that their income is at or above 125% of the federal poverty guidelines. If the citizen’s income does not meet the eligibility criteria, a financial co-sponsor must be used; the undocumented partner’s income cannot be included (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2008). This is particularly concerning as mixed-status families are more likely to be low-income when compared with other families and may have more difficulty meeting the financial standard set by the U.S. government (Fix & Zimmerman, 2001). Also, it can cost thousands of dollars to sponsor a spouse.

To this point, no research has examined the impact of mixed-status partnership on U.S. citizens. Because couples are sometimes treated as a legal unit and other times as legally separate, status complexities exist for these couples. This study fills a gap by exploring the overlooked realities confronting citizens, primarily White female citizens, partnered with undocumented Mexican men, as they attempt to adjust to the ambiguous legal structure of the United States and fight against public misperceptions that leave them vulnerable.

## Methods

This research is part of a larger study focused on mixed-status couples conducted over a two-year period (2007-2009). The focus of this paper is the experiences of 18 U.S. citizen women

(primarily White) who are partnered with undocumented or formerly undocumented Mexican men. I utilized standard written interview questions, however, a flexible format was encouraged. I asked participants open-ended questions related to their mixed-status partnership. The questions included experiences with the immigration system, the quality of the couple's relationships, family strengths and needs, and any other topics they felt were important. I used purposive sampling, specifically snowball sampling, among community networks of undocumented immigrants and their partners (Patton, 2002).

I interviewed participants in person ( $n = 12$ ) or, because of distance, on the telephone at a research center on a Midwestern university campus ( $n = 6$ ). During the initial phases of my research I learned some individuals were hesitant to participate without their partner present. Thus, the majority of interviews took place with both members of the couple present (11 couples) and I interviewed the remaining couples separately per their request (7 couples). In-person interviews generally took place in the couples' homes (9) or at private community settings (3). Due to the sensitivity of this research, participants were not required to provide their names or give written consent; only verbal consent was required per the Institutional Review Board. I gave participants the option to be audio-taped (11) or for notes only to be taken (7), allowing them to choose the option with which they were most comfortable. The interviews typically averaged 60 to 90 minutes. When writing results, pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities.

This study included participants living in seven states and one participant residing in Mexico. An overwhelming majority of women were married ( $n = 15$ ) and reported being married for three years on average and with their partner for about five years. Couples who were not married or engaged were together from one to three years. Sixteen of these couples were interracial while two indicated that they and their partner are both Latino/a. The average female participant was 32 years old, and slightly older than her male partner (about 28 years old). Most women either had no children or were part of a blended family. The women in this study had more education than their male partners. The median family income reported was \$59,000 per year and about half of the couples owned their own home.

Data analysis for this research began after the first interview. I used an inductive process that focused on building larger themes and description emerging from the raw data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, I converted the word-for-word interview transcripts and notes into Atlas.ti software to analyze the data (Muhr, 2004). Transcribed data are read line-by-line, on at least three different occasions. During the first reading I was concerned with gaining "a sense of the whole" (Hatch, 2002). The second read-through included coding key words and phrases. During the third assessment I began to develop a list of codes. Three themes emerged: (1) once you get married to a citizen it's (not) over; (2) betrayed by my own country; and (3) little things you don't think about. Because U.S. citizens partnered with undocumented immigrants rarely have the opportunity to tell their stories, I chose to identify themes using the participants' own words.

## Results

### *Once You Get Married to a Citizen it's (Not) Over*

U.S. citizens, regardless of marital status, consistently indicated that few people truly understand how complicated the U.S. immigration system is, including the process of obtaining family visas through marriage. The general public perception is a simple equation in which marriage equals legal papers. Several citizen participants were shocked to learn otherwise.

Rebecca, a newlywed, anticipated that the immigration process would be lengthy and expensive, but she had no idea that her husband, Antonio, would be required to return to Mexico for an unspecified period of time, and even then his case might get rejected. He crossed the Mexico–United States border "illegally" and has lived in the U.S. unlawfully for more than one year, thus he will likely face a ten-year bar from the United States. Similar to other couples, Rebecca and Antonio were advised by an attorney to put their file on hold as their extreme hardship waiver would likely be denied. In essence they were told to "wait until reform happens." Rebecca explains her lack of knowledge: "I thought, there's a lot of paperwork, it takes a long time, but it's for sure. You just gotta put in the time and do it, spend the money."

Despite what their attorney called a “clean case,” (law-abiding immigrant of good moral character) Abby’s husband, Manuel, received a ten-year bar from the United States and they subsequently relocated their family to Mexico. Manuel also entered the country “illegally” and lived without status for more than one year. Abby has particular empathy for people from Mexico with few resources who apply for U.S. residence:

We went through two and half years of paperwork, thousands and thousands of dollars and he got denied. ... I mean if it’s that hard for someone who’s married to an American, how are people who aren’t married to an American supposed to do it the right way before they come here illegally?

Participants expressed how crucial it is to inform the public about how difficult it is for undocumented immigrants to gain legal status, even through marriage. Lola says, “I think people automatically think ‘well once you get married to a citizen it’s over,’ well no that’s not true.”

#### *Betrayed By My Own Country*

The emotional burdens of mixed-status couples were often greater than U.S. citizens imagined. Faith describes herself as a devout Catholic and college-educated professional who always “does the right thing.” Unfortunately she thought life would get easier after she and her husband, Mariano, were married. She explains, “I couldn’t get car insurance because my husband didn’t have [legal status].” After their wedding, she called her insurance company to add Mariano to her plan; she had been with this company for more than ten years. After speaking with an insurance agent, it eventually became obvious that her husband was undocumented. Not only did they deny Mariano’s car insurance, they also denied her. She said, “I called and called and finally found someone who would insure me.” Faith realized if she wanted to maintain car insurance she was going to have to hide her connection to Mariano; she has done this for their entire marriage. “It was very upsetting to me that I had to lie. I cried all day that day.”

In addition, Faith said that during 2008, when the U.S.

government sent out economic stimulus payments to eligible families, neither she nor her husband received a check, even though they are both employed. According to the Internal Revenue Service (2009), families filing taxes jointly were not eligible for the stimulus payment if any individual in the household used an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) rather than a social security number. Faith asserts, "My rights as an American citizen have been compromised."

U.S. citizens sponsoring an immigrant spouse must also be able to provide documentation that they can financially support their spouse to avoid being a "drain on the system." Sue explains, "I think it's unfair that being a U.S. citizen we have to be able to afford our spouse and we have to be able to prove that without them we are going to be able to suffer. It's ridiculous." An interesting contradiction exists for economic resources and marriage. Having an immigrant spouse leave the country to attempt to adjust their legal status has the potential to increase the likelihood of accessing public assistance as families with two incomes lose half of their resources overnight, especially those with children. No participants reported that they had accessed public welfare programs while their spouse was absent, but a few did present this as a possible scenario.

Wendy and Ricardo faced significant financial struggles during his absence to Mexico. She explained that without her husband's income, she was below 125% of the U.S. poverty guidelines and that her mother agreed to cosponsor her husband. Even though Ricardo's hardship waiver was approved and he now has legal status, she explains her anger at the government. "I felt violated as an American. I was like 'screw this country.'" She continues, "I have the right to pursue happiness, to have my family together, united." She says, "I felt betrayed by my country."

#### *Little Things You Don't Think About*

Undocumented individuals are no strangers to dealing with persecution. Driving without a license or car insurance, working under a false name or false papers all lead to tremendous strain. On the other hand, U.S. citizens consistently reported that their new marginalized social location partnered

with an undocumented immigrant was especially difficult. Chelsea says, "I always worry that something could happen and [Juan] could be taken away." U.S. citizens were much more cognizant and anxious about legal uncertainties than their partners.

The loss of freedom to travel was one of the main issues often taken for granted by U.S. citizens. Castles (2005) argues that within a globalized world mobility has become the most powerful and coveted stratifying factor. The majority of undocumented partners did not have valid driver's licenses and car insurance, but nearly all of them drive regularly. With increasingly restrictive state immigration policies and laws, obtaining a valid driver's license has become an increasing challenge. This has created a substantial barrier for the day-to-day functioning of families and has significant ramifications for citizen partners.

Chelsea's husband, Juan, commutes 40 minutes to work early each morning and for a while she was driving him to work. However, with her full-time job and other family responsibilities, this arrangement soon became impractical. Although Juan does not have a license, he does have car insurance, but it is in his friend's name. Chelsea too is uncomfortable with having him drive to work; however, they are left with few options.

Lola is well aware of the boundaries placed upon her relationship with her fiancé, Eduardo. New restrictive legislation has created additional barriers for them and in her opinion is nothing more than "racial profiling." In contrast to her husband, Lola experiences a great deal of anxiety about their situation:

There are certain things that we cannot do because of our relationship. We can't fly, you know. We were gonna go to [a neighboring state] but I know that you're worried about driving. They just passed a new law. Basically it's like racial profiling. People can pull you over if you're Hispanic, and boom ask you for papers or even, if I'm driving the car and we get pulled over and they ask who's got papers and if he doesn't I would go to jail.

The majority of undocumented partners do not have access to their citizen partner's employment benefits, even if they are married. Anna, who cohabitates with Carlos, explains that marriage will make little difference for their situation. "Even if he were to marry me, he wouldn't be able to get my health insurance." Similarly, Chelsea explains that her company offers health care benefits to spouses, yet her husband does not have a social security number, therefore he has not accessed this resource. She says, "I'm not sure how to pose the questions to the insurance company." Typically a social security number must be provided in order to appoint one's spouse as an eligible beneficiary of benefits such as life insurance.

Finally, going out to a bar to enjoy a few drinks was a surprising hurdle that given another context would seem mundane. Donna says, "There were times when I'd feel like I can't tell the whole truth or we have to make up a story about why my husband wasn't able to do something like travel or even go to a bar." Anna sums it up: "It's little things you don't think about and you take for granted."

### Discussion and Implications

The present study exposes a gap in the literature by exploring the contemporary vulnerabilities of U.S. citizens in mixed-status partnerships. This work moves beyond early discussions that focus on citizen children in mixed-status families (Van Hook & Balistreri, 2006). Citizen partners experience a double burden of navigating an impenetrable immigration system, while at the same time fighting against deep public misunderstanding. Contrary to widespread notions, marriage to a U.S. citizen does not provide automatic legalization for undocumented partners. Instead, the immigration process is extremely complicated, often leading to strain and an unanticipated loss of benefits to U.S. citizens, especially those who are low-income. This research illustrates how the lives of citizens and non-citizens are intertwined in ways of which the public is grossly unaware.

Similar to the findings reported in Fix and Zimmerman (2001), these participants' experiences validate that restrictive immigration policies create a second class citizenship for U.S. citizen spouses. Citizens simply were not familiar with this

new marginalized status in which their rights were suddenly compromised. They took for granted the ability to coexist with few constraints and interpreted these assumed privileges as an entitlement inherently tied to their citizenship. Unlike the families in Fix and Zimmerman's study (2001), the majority of participants in this study were not low-income. Yet, when attempting to sponsor a non-citizen partner, only the citizen's income can be included, which is likely to be lower than the combined family income. In reality, many citizens rely on their immigrant partner's incomes to sustain two-income families and are put at greater risk of needing to access public benefits.

Most of the U.S. citizens in this study were White and coming from a position of assumed rights that they did not get. This caused them anxiety, perhaps more than their Mexican husbands, who may have more to lose from their undocumented status. Future research should explore the complex intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, and social privilege in citizenship. It is also important to compare the experiences of citizens in mixed-status partnership with other undocumented groups, beyond Mexico. Finally, exploring the viewpoints of the immigrant spouses, including women partnered with native-born men, is needed to provide a more complete picture of the challenges for both citizens and non-citizens in mixed-status marriage.

In conclusion, outdated stereotypes must be replaced with the current experiences of mixed-status couples in the context of harsh immigration policies and laws. As one participant, Donna, stated, "I think we do need to get the word out how there are couples like us that exist and it's not as easy as just marrying somebody to be able to get your status." Bhuyan (2010) argues, "legislators and their public supporters may be less inclined to target immigrants through increasing documentary standards, if the costs to citizens are more visible" (p. 80). Increasing awareness of the hardships for citizen spouses in mixed-status marriage may create more social empathy for their vulnerable position, as well as for the plight of immigrants.

Although comprehensive immigration reform is desperately needed, families cannot afford to wait for an improved political climate that supports a complete Congressional overhaul. The hardships of family separation and an impenetrable immigration system support Cruz's (2010)

recommendation that family members with pending visa applications be permitted to live in the country legally and not be forced to travel abroad to adjust their status. She also advocates for creating provisional changes to the current system as modifications which may alleviate some of the immediate hardships facing mixed-status couples. In line with the recommendations made by Cruz (2010), we must permit a greater number of family visas and remove the unlawful presence bars. Laws and policies that impact immigrants also have unintended consequences for U.S. citizens. This study makes clear the need to change harsh, ambiguous immigration policies and promote the human rights of mixed-status families.

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# Fear vs. Facts: Examining the Economic Impact of Undocumented Immigrants in the U.S.

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*Undocumented immigration has become a contentious issue in the U.S. over the past decade. Opponents of undocumented immigration have argued that undocumented immigrants are a social and financial burden to the U.S. which has led to the passage of drastic and costly policies. This paper examined existing state and national data and found that undocumented immigrants do contribute to the economies of federal, state, and local governments through taxes and can stimulate job growth, but the cost of providing law enforcement, health care, and education impacts federal, state, and local governments differently. At the federal level, undocumented immigrants tend to contribute more money in taxes than they consume in services, however, the net economic costs or benefits to state and local governments varies throughout the U.S.*

*Key words: immigration, undocumented immigration, social work, policy, Latinos, economy*

Despite the recent reported decrease in undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., undocumented immigration to the Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, December 2012, Volume XXXIX, Number 4

U.S. continues to be an issue attracting increasing attention from policymakers and the public. An accurate account of the scope of undocumented immigration is impossible, however it is estimated that in 1990 there were 3.5 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. In almost twenty years, the undocumented immigrant population grew to an estimated 11.9 million people, representing approximately one third of the total U.S. immigrant population (38 million), 4% of the total U.S. population, and 5.4% of the U.S. workforce (8.3 million) (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Undocumented immigrants come to the U.S. from around the world, however the majority, an estimated 76%, are Latino, of which 59% (7 million) are estimated to be from Mexico and 22% (2.1 million) from the rest of Latin America (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Migration, documented and undocumented, is propelled by both 'push' and 'pull' factors. Poverty, violence, crime, and corruption push migrants from sending countries, and the promise of economic prosperity where employers are looking for low-wage workers pull migrants towards receiving countries such as the U.S. (Liebig & Souza-Poza, 2004).

The public policy debate surrounding immigration often involves strident rhetoric, and arguments against undocumented immigrants can be especially harsh, revolving around the burden to U.S. taxpayers. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reported that undocumented immigrants contribute more in taxes than the costs of providing services at the federal level. There are costs to some state and local governments for providing law enforcement, education, and health care services to undocumented immigrants, but those costs represent a small percentage of their state and local budgets (CBO, 2007). Nevertheless, many politicians continue to argue that undocumented immigrants are a huge economic drain because of the costs associated with law enforcement, education, and use of state and federal health and social services by undocumented immigrants, which lead to diminished economic opportunity for U.S. citizens (Burns, 2011; Stein, 2011).

The economic arguments against undocumented immigrants include the costs to tax payers resulting from the "criminal" and "illegal" nature of undocumented immigration, such as the costs associated with law enforcement, border security,

measures to prevent, detain, and deport the undocumented, and related crimes such as human smuggling and trafficking. The Heritage Foundation reported that the cost of incarcerating undocumented immigrants "... represent(s) a huge drain on taxpayers" with California, Texas, Arizona, Florida, New York, and Illinois absorbing the greatest financial impact (von Spakovsky, 2011, ¶6).

The perception that "illegal aliens" are responsible for higher crime rates is deeply rooted in American public opinion. These opinions in turn shape political behavior, which ultimately results in public policies and practices that are created absent of rigorous empirical evidence (Chávez, 2001; Lee, 2003). Examples of this are ordinances and bills that have passed and been enacted into law in several localities and states across the U.S. In 2006 the city council of Hazleton, Pennsylvania passed the "Illegal Immigration Relief Act Ordinance," declaring that illegal immigration leads to higher crime rates and the city's legal residents and citizens have the right to live in peace, free of crime committed by illegal aliens (Rumbaut, 2008). Furthermore, several states, including Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, and Utah, have enacted laws putting local, county, and state law enforcement personnel in the position of relying on stereotypes about what an "illegal alien" looks or sounds like (American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], 2011). A related policy goal is to build a fence along the U.S.-Mexico border that would guard national security from the perceived threat of undocumented immigration.

Another argument against undocumented immigration is that local, state, and federal governments are burdened with increased costs through their utilization of educational and social systems such as primary and secondary education, health care programs, emergency rooms, welfare, and other anti-poverty programs to which they do not contribute through taxes. Several anti-immigration organizations, such as The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and the Center for Immigration Studies, also argue that undocumented immigrants' use of state and federal social welfare programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), school lunch programs, and Medicaid cost taxpayers billions of dollars

annually (Camarota, 2011; Federation for American Immigration Reform, [FAIR], 2000). FAIR also argues that the cost associated with educating undocumented children in the U.S. is a major cause of the budget deficits facing many states (Ewing, 2003).

Although current social work literature discusses the social impact of various policies on undocumented immigrants in the U.S. (Androff et al., 2011; Cleaveland, 2010) and calls for advocacy and action by social workers on behalf of immigrants (Padilla, Shapiro, Fernández-Castro, & Faulkner, 2008), there is a gap in the social work literature regarding the economic impact of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. The purpose of this paper is to begin to fill that gap by examining the economic impact of undocumented immigration and to assess the costs and benefits of the undocumented people living and working in the U.S., as well as the economic and social costs of public policies that have been enacted to deter undocumented immigration. Further, this paper will analyze the available evidence relevant to each of these arguments in an attempt to provide social workers with an empirical basis for effective public policy advocacy regarding undocumented immigration.

## Economic Costs of Undocumented Immigrants

### *Crime, Law Enforcement, and Incarceration*

Throughout the first decade of the 2000s, discontent and controversy erupted among local, state, and federal policymakers, business leaders, advocacy groups and organizations, and citizens regarding the incarceration of “criminal aliens” in the United States. Since many undocumented immigrants in the United States are young men from Mexico and Central America with characteristics similar to native-born populations who are disproportionately incarcerated (young, male, poor, high-school dropout, ethnic minority), popular stereotypes tend to reinforce the impression that undocumented immigrants and criminality are linked (Butcher & Piehl, 2007; Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007). However, the existing evidence on the incarceration of undocumented immigrants, as well as the costs associated with incarcerating undocumented immigrants

in local, state, and federal penal institutions, does not reflect the popular negative stereotypes and public discourse which often seem to guide the decisions and policy making of many current local, state, and federal legislators.

Previous studies have found that violent and non-violent crime rates among undocumented immigrants decreased during the late-1990s and mid-2000s (Bailey & Hayes, 2006; Butcher & Piehl, 2007; Nadler, 2008; Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007). According to Rumbaut and Ewing (2007), even as the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States doubled during the late 1990s, the rates of violent and property crimes decreased 34% and 26%, respectively. Using data from the annual Federal Bureau of Investigation Unified Crime Reports, Nadler (2008) compared the differences in total crime rates between High Immigrant Jurisdictions (HIJs) (defined as the 19 states with the most resident immigrants) whose resident populations include the highest proportion of immigrants and highest percentage influx of immigrants, and non-HIJs in the United States between 1999 and 2006. The study found that the total crime rates decreased by a little more than 10% across the nation (3808.1 per 100,000 residents in 2006 versus 4273.8 per 100,000 residents in 1999). Crime, both violent and non-violent, decreased at a faster rate in the 19 HIJs than in the non-HIJs. In 2006, the total crime rate in HIJs was lower than non-HIJs (3807.1 per 100,000 residents versus 3809.4 per 100,000 residents). Finally, the total crimes rate decreased from between 7 to 15 percent across all of the jurisdictions between 1999 and 2006. When examining the incarceration rate of undocumented immigrants, researchers found that the rate is lower than that for native-born citizens (Bailey & Hayes, 2006; Butcher & Piehl, 2007; Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007). Furthermore, there is evidence that immigration does not increase crime rates and actually reduces crime rates in urban areas (Reid, Weiss, Adelman & Jaret, 2005; Sampson, Morenoff & Raudenbush, 2005).

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (2005) examined the costs associated with incarcerating undocumented immigrants and found that the cost in local, state, and federal institutions totaled approximately \$5.8 billion for calendar years 2001 through 2004, with local jails and state prisons absorbing the most costs (\$1.7 billion a year). While the cost of

incarceration is important, estimating this cost is highly variable based upon a number of factors, including whether the local, state, and federal criminal justice institutions collect data on undocumented immigrants. For example, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) does not collect or keep information on "criminal aliens," and the numbers that do exist on "criminal aliens" include both documented and undocumented immigrants who are in the U.S. Nevertheless, the CBO reported that the cost to state and local governments for incarcerating undocumented immigrants represents an average of less than 5% of the state and local budgets allocated to law enforcement (CBO, 2007). The highest local cost for law enforcement activities involving undocumented immigrants was incurred by San Diego County (\$50.3 million), and that cost represented 90% of the state of California's border counties costs associated with undocumented immigrants for the year, but was almost half of the total dollar amount (\$108.2 million) spent on law enforcement activities involving undocumented immigrants by all California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas border counties in the United States (Salant et al., 2001).

### *Health Care*

Health care costs associated with providing care to undocumented immigrants is another contentious issue. The overwhelming majority of undocumented immigrants do not have health insurance because they are not eligible for government programs and are often not eligible for employer-provided health insurance (Goldman, Smith, & Sood, 2006). Although studies indicate that undocumented immigrants underutilize health care compared to the general population, undocumented immigrants often use emergency rooms because they are mandated to provide care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay (Ku & Matani, 2001; Marshall, Urrutia-Rojas, Soto Mas, & Coggin, 2005). This mandate can lead to higher costs for hospitals, especially for non-emergency related health care issues (Okie, 2007). As a result, there is an estimated economic cost associated with providing health care to undocumented immigrants of between \$6 and \$10 billion per year (Camarota, 2004; Goldman, Smith, & Sood, 2006).

Under the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, the federal

government provided \$250 million annually through 2008 to reimburse hospitals and other health care providers for the costs associated with providing emergency health care services to undocumented immigrants (CBO, 2007). Although there are costs associated with health care provision to undocumented immigrants, due to their lower rates of use of health care services, these expenditures account for only 1.5% of U.S. medical costs (Okie, 2007) and the estimated tax burden per household was only \$11 per year for providing health care to undocumented immigrants (Goldman, Smith, & Sood, 2006). While some may argue that no tax dollars should go toward providing services to a population who many believe should not even be in the U.S., the \$11 annual per household tax burden is not the overwhelming financial burden that the media and many politicians claim.

### *Education*

The 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe* guaranteed that undocumented children have a right to be educated in U.S. public schools. Since then, the costs associated with educating undocumented immigrant children have been an issue for state and local governments. The average amount spent by all states during the 2009-2010 academic year was \$10,586 per student (National Education Association [NEA], 2010). There are an estimated 1.6 million undocumented children living in the United States (Passel, Capps, & Fix, 2004). By taking into account the national average spent per student (not accounting for pre-K children or dropouts), the amount needed per year to educate undocumented children would be an estimated \$17 billion per year. Although undocumented immigrants can be found in all states, six states continue to account for almost two-thirds of the undocumented population (California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, & New Jersey), which indicates that the costs to those states would be higher than to other states (Passel, Capps, & Fix, 2004).

While there is no question that there are economic costs associated with educating undocumented immigrant children, this represents only 3.3% of the total cost of between \$520-\$535 billion spent annually to educate all children in the U.S. (NEA, 2010; Passel, Capps, & Fix, 2004; U.S. Department of Education,

2005). Also, under No Child Left Behind, the federal government has the English Language Acquisition Program to reimburse states for the costs associated with children participating in English acquisition programs, regardless of immigration status. While the federal government reimbursed states \$621 million under that program in 2006, that amount only covers the costs associated with English language programs, and not the general education of undocumented immigrants (CBO, 2007).

### The Social and Economic Costs of Anti-Immigrant Policies

The negative rhetoric and public perception of undocumented immigration has led to the implementation of new anti-immigration policies. Not only are there financial implications to implementing anti-immigrant policies, but social impacts as well, because groups of people are subjected to differential treatment. Anti-immigrant policies have deleterious effects on the health of the undocumented population as they live in constant states of fear; individuals are deported, families separated, and they experience discrimination. The Pew Hispanic Center reports that six in ten Latinos worry that they themselves or a family member or close friend will be deported (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). Many children of undocumented parents are often U.S. citizens, yet despite their citizenship status they also carry the burden of many anti-immigrant policies. There are an estimated 5.5 million children with undocumented parents, approximately three-quarters whom are U.S. citizens (Chaudry et al., 2010). Chaudry and colleagues (2010) found that parent-child separation due to deportation poses serious risks to children's immediate safety, economic security, well-being, and long-term development. Children experience changes in their eating and sleeping, cry more, are more afraid, and are anxious, withdrawn, clingy, or aggressive.

Whereas in 2001, Americans perceived Blacks as the racial/ethnic group that was most discriminated against in the U.S., in 2009 Latinos were perceived as the ethnic group that is most often subjected to discrimination (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). Perceptions of discrimination vary among Latinos; 70% of foreign born Latinos view discrimination against Latinos as a

major problem, whereas only 49% of native-born Latinos agree (Lopez, Taylor, & Morin, 2010). Regardless of nativity, one in ten Latinos report being asked by police officers or other authorities about their immigration status (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). Substantial evidence links discrimination to indicators of poor physical and mental health among immigrants and children of immigrants (Araújo Dawson, 2009; Ayón, Marsiglia, & Parsai, 2010; Ding & Hargraves, 2009; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2008).

In 1997 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and Social Security Administration (SSA) partnered to implement a basic pilot program, commonly known as E-verify, an automated internet-based verification system that allows employers to voluntarily check the work eligibility of potential new hires (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2010). In 2008 the CBO estimated that enacting a mandatory E-verify program would decrease federal revenues by \$17.3 billion from 2009-2018 due to workers leaving the formal economy for the unregulated, untaxed underground economy (Orszag, 2008). These projections have materialized in Arizona, one of the first states to mandate the use of E-verify, where businesses are hiring workers off the books without paying income or payroll taxes (Immigration Policy Center, 2010a). In addition, the CBO projected an increase in direct spending of \$30 million for the federal judges authorized by this bill, and costs for implementing E-verify are estimated at \$10.3 billion over the 2009-2013 period and \$23.4 billion over the 2009-2018 period (Orszag, 2008).

The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) requires all individuals to provide proof of citizenship and identity, with a passport or birth certificate, when applying for or renewing Medicaid coverage. As a result, forty-six states had to change their policy, as they previously only required a signed statement of citizenship, under penalty of perjury (Smith et al., 2006; Sommers, 2010). The goal of this policy is to exclude undocumented immigrants from accessing Medicaid or public health insurance (Sommers, 2010).

The findings regarding the effectiveness of this policy have been mixed. Eight months following the implementation of DRA several states experienced significant declines in Medicaid enrollment, particularly among low-income children

(Ross, 2007). Ross (2007) found that this policy is likely to take a toll on working poor families, regardless of documentation status, because they are now required to visit the Medicaid office in person, whereas before they were able to submit the paperwork by mail. In order to meet these new requirements, they have to take time off from work to secure the necessary documentation, such as a birth certificate, visit the Medicaid office, and cover the fees for the documents. In addition, access to Medicaid eligibility has been delayed because it takes time to access the required documents.

Projected costs to states following the passage of DRA ranged from \$1.3 million to \$19 million (Ross, 2007). Findings from the Current Population Survey (2004-2008) reveal that the policy has been effective in reducing Medicaid enrollment among non-citizens and has not significantly impacted citizens (Sommers, 2010). Results indicate that 1 in 4 non-citizen adults were screened out while 1 in 8 non-citizen children were screened out through the policy. However, the cost-benefit analysis revealed that instead of saving the government money, the policy has actually cost the U.S. approximately \$600 million through administrative spending and compliance costs imposed on U.S. citizens applying for Medicaid; every \$100 spent on verifying citizenship and residency only saved 14 cents (Sommers, 2010).

In 2005, the Secure Border Initiative (SBI) was launched by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The SBI is a multi-year, multibillion-dollar program aimed at securing the U.S. borders and reducing illegal immigration (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009). The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency is responsible for managing the SBI program and developing a comprehensive border protection system. The proposal for securing the border has two main components: (1) *SBI<sub>net</sub>* which utilizes radars, sensors, and cameras to detect, identify and classify the threat level associated with an illegal entry into the U.S.; and (2) the SBI tactical infrastructure (TI), or fencing, roads, and lighting intended to enhance the U.S. Border Patrol agents' ability to respond to the area of the illegal entry and lead to arrest (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009). At this time, the focus has been in the Southwest region of the border, as it has been identified as needing the most attention.

The Consolidation Appropriation Act of 2008 required DHS to complete construction of 370 miles of border fence by December 31, 2008. DHS set a goal to complete 670 miles of fencing by December 31, 2008. These goals were not met. By October 31, 2008 CBP had completed 215 miles of primary SBI fencing, costing approximately \$625 million. The average cost per mile of pedestrian fencing is \$2.8 million per mile with a range of \$400,000 to \$4.8 million (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009). *SBI<sub>net</sub>* has also been unsuccessful and costly. DHS has spent over \$1.5 billion since 2006 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2010). Boeing has billed the department more than \$850 million since the project began (Bennett, 2010). This large investment has resulted in only 53 miles of unreliable coverage of a more than 2,000 mile border. In January 2011, the *SBI<sub>net</sub>* project was cancelled by Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano.

### Ecnomic Benefits Provided by Undocumented Immigrants

#### *Federal Level*

There are economic costs and benefits of having undocumented immigrants and their children living in the United States. The CBO reported that on a federal level, revenues generated by undocumented immigrants are greater than the expense of providing services because undocumented immigrants do not qualify for federal programs (CBO, 2007). In addition to the additional revenue generated through taxes, undocumented immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy in other ways.

The financial solvency of the Social Security and Medicare programs in the U.S. relies on payroll tax revenue (Segal, 2010). Despite the public discourse to the contrary, the majority of undocumented immigrants pay income taxes through the use of Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) or through false Social Security numbers (National Council of La Raza [NCLR], 2008; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). As a result, undocumented immigrants contribute over \$7 billion annually to Social Security and over \$1.5 billion to Medicare (NCLR, 2008).

Although some undocumented immigrants receive Social Security and Medicare benefits, the majority do not receive any benefits from those programs (NCLR, 2008; Sommers, 2010). Since false Social Security numbers are not appropriately linked to an individual who can take advantage of Social Security benefits, the majority of contributions to Social Security from undocumented immigrants go into an earnings suspense file. The Social Security Administration factors in the over \$7 billion annual contributions from undocumented immigrants into the Social Security Administration's calculations and projections for the solvency of Social Security (Porter, 2005; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). The retirement of the baby boom generation will lead to increased expenditures for Social Security (Abel, 2003) and additional tax revenue is needed to provide Social Security benefits to current and future retirees. Since undocumented immigrants are ineligible to receive government services, it is estimated that undocumented immigrants pay an average of \$1,800 per household, per year more to Social Security and Medicare than they utilize in services (Camarota, 2004). Therefore, undocumented immigrants actually contribute to the solvency of Social Security and Medicare and help to provide services to current and future retirees.

#### *State and Local Level*

While current rhetoric in the immigration debate decries how undocumented workers steal jobs, immigrants working in the U.S. do not take away jobs from citizens; instead they stimulate the state and local economies and complement the workforce by providing a necessary pool of unskilled labor (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). For example, despite the costs, there may be economic benefits associated with having undocumented children in schools that are often not considered. Higher student enrollment may lead to the creation of more jobs, not just for teachers, but in all educational-related services including administrators, maintenance staff, teaching assistants and other paraprofessionals, bus drivers, and other school staff which would help local and state economies. The creation of jobs as a result of higher student enrollment often results in an increase in federal funding for schools (Spradlin, 2008) and can lead to an increase in state and local revenue

generated by income and sales taxes (Harvey, 2011). Higher student enrollment may lead to an increase in economic activity as a result of the purchase of additional textbooks and other educational materials, as well as with families' back-to-school shopping that is done before every academic year. Businesses anticipate the annual surge in sales and higher profits, which benefit the local economy because of the sale taxes generated from back-to-school shoppers (Censky, 2010; Fierro, 2010).

Contrary to the implication that immigrants exacerbate unemployment, high rates of immigration are linked to less unemployment (Riley, 2008). This does not diminish the economy, but encourages specialization and increases wages for native workers (Card, 2007). Most undocumented immigrants in the U.S. work in low-skilled jobs and do not compete with American workers. The influx of low-skilled laborers into the U.S. has been shown to slow the decline of manufacturing industries (Capps et al., 2007) and contribute to the creation of new jobs (Peri, 2006). For example, the Bell Policy Center found that for every job held by an undocumented immigrant in Colorado, 0.8 jobs are created (Boven, 2011; Fairley & Jones, 2011). While there are few official estimates from the federal government regarding how much undocumented immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy, the available evidence indicates that undocumented immigration is part of a positive force that immigration has upon the U.S. economy.

In addition to the economic benefits to Social Security and Medicare, undocumented immigrants also provide revenue to state and local governments as a result of their employment, purchases, and taxes. Unfortunately, state and local governments do not use a consistent method to analyze the economic impact of undocumented immigrants, which prohibits accurate comparisons of positive and negative economic impacts across all states (CBO, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to present the information that is available, in order to dispel the myths that undocumented immigrants do not pay any taxes and do not have a positive impact on some state and local economies. Table 1 provides the available information that allows for comparisons of the economic contributions through taxes of undocumented immigrants across various states.

Table 1. State and Local Economic Contributions of Undocumented Immigrants

State	Type of Tax	Total Tax Contribution
California	state income	\$280 million <sup>1</sup>
Colorado	state income, sales, & property	\$159 - \$194 million <sup>2</sup>
Georgia	state income, sales, & property	\$215.6 - \$252.5 million <sup>3</sup>
Indiana	state and county income, sales, & property	\$96.8 million <sup>4</sup>
Iowa	state income, sales, excise, & property	\$40 - \$62 million <sup>5</sup>
Missouri	state income, excise, & property	\$29 - \$57 million <sup>6</sup>
New Mexico	state income, sales, & property	\$64.7 million <sup>7</sup>
Oregon	state income, excise, & property	\$134 - \$187 million <sup>8</sup>
Virginia	state income, sales, excise, & property	\$145 - \$174 million <sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pastor, Scoggins, Tran, & Ortiz (2010); <sup>2</sup> Baker & Jones (2006); <sup>3</sup> Coffey (2006); <sup>4</sup> Heet (2009); <sup>5</sup> Pearson & Sheehan (2007); <sup>6</sup> Ehresman (2006); <sup>7</sup> Immigration Policy Center (2010c); <sup>8</sup> Oregon Center for Public Policy (2007); <sup>9</sup> Cassidy & Okos (2008)

Also, contrary to studies reporting that the cost to states with high numbers of undocumented immigrants outweighs their economic contributions, several states reported that undocumented immigrants contribute more in state and local taxes than they consume in services, as well as stimulating state and local economies. The Texas Comptroller reported that undocumented immigrants provided \$17.7 billion in gross state product, including over \$424 million more in state revenues than they consumed in state services including education, health care and law enforcement (Strayhorn, 2006). If all undocumented immigrants in Texas were to leave or be deported, not only would Texas lose over \$400 million in state revenues, but Texas would also lose 2.3% of jobs in the state because of the economic activity of undocumented immigrants

that supports businesses and employment (Strayhorn, 2006). Arizona, another state with a high undocumented immigrant population, would lose \$11.7 billion in gross state product and over 140,000 jobs in the state if all undocumented immigrants living in the state were to leave or be deported (Immigration Policy Center, 2010b).

Even studies that report an overall economic loss as a result of providing services to undocumented immigrants indicate that those losses are negligible once the economic benefits of undocumented immigrants are considered (Hanson, 2007). In Illinois, Mehta and colleagues (Mehta, Theodore, Mora, & Wade, 2002) found that the purchases of undocumented immigrants in the Chicago metropolitan area stimulated an additional \$2.56 billion in local spending which supports 31,908 jobs. Iowa estimated that undocumented immigrants subsidize services that only U.S. citizens and documented immigrants can access because undocumented immigrants pay more in state and local taxes than the costs of providing the state and local services they utilize (Pearson & Sheehan, 2007). In Colorado, undocumented immigrants contribute more in income, property, and sales tax revenue than they consume in services provided by the state for education, health care, and incarceration (Fairley & Jones, 2011). In addition to the tax revenue, the economic activity generated by undocumented immigrants in Colorado created an additional 91,000 jobs, \$4.7 billion in personal income, and \$15 billion in industry output for the state of Colorado (Boven, 2011; Colorado Center on Law & Policy, 2011; Fairley & Jones, 2011).

### Implications for Social Work Practice

The negative public discourse regarding undocumented immigration may lead to increased levels of perceived discrimination among all Latinos, but undocumented Latinos in particular. The mission of the social work profession is to promote social justice and social change on behalf of oppressed and vulnerable populations (NASW, 2008); therefore, the social work profession is uniquely positioned to take action around the impact of the negative public perceptions and public policies regarding undocumented immigration. On the micro level, social workers who work with individuals and

families must be aware of the negative impacts that perceived discrimination can have on the physical and mental health of individuals. As stated earlier, a plethora of studies have found that the physical and mental health of immigrants and children of immigrants is negatively impacted by discrimination. It is therefore necessary for social workers to assess physical and specific mental health conditions that may be associated with perceived and experienced discrimination such as stress, depression, and anxiety (Finch, Hummer, Kol, & Vega, 2001).

At a macro level, social workers must also work with communities and facilitate educational forums to discuss the fears surrounding undocumented immigration. By inviting community members and the media, these forums can be used to dispel misinformation surrounding the economic costs associated with undocumented immigrants' use of public services and demonstrate the positive impact that undocumented immigrants may have on the local, state, and U.S. economies. Social workers must also continue to advocate for social justice for undocumented immigrants. Social work agencies providing services to Latino communities can create coalitions that lobby politicians and advocate for more just and humane policies aimed at undocumented immigrants in the U.S.

Furthermore, social workers need to develop strategies and programs to help immigrants negotiate the effects of anti-immigrant policy and practices. For example, in some states most publicly-funded efforts to promote diversity have been eliminated (i.e., bilingual education and ethnic-based programs in schools). Consistent with a strengths-based approach, social workers in community based settings can engage in developing programs that promote ethnic identity development, as researchers have found that strong ethnic identity promotes well-being and protects youth from the negative effects of discrimination (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). Social workers can also raise awareness among immigrant communities by informing them of their Constitutional rights. For example, the ACLU disseminates "Know Your Rights" information in English and Spanish about individuals' as well as immigrants' rights when interacting with law enforcement agents (ACLU, 2010). Social workers can partner with immigration attorneys to organize

workshops to ensure that immigrant communities know their rights to minimize the potential for civil rights abuses.

The policies that have been enacted to deter undocumented immigration are costly and ineffective. Therefore, all social workers should advocate for policies that will provide more accurate information about the economic impact of undocumented immigrants, that will help meet the demand for labor in the U.S., and that will allow undocumented immigrants to contribute fully to the U.S. while allowing them to improve their lives and provide for their families. All states should conduct a comprehensive cost benefit analysis similar to the one conducted by the Texas Office of the Comptroller in 2006.

The federal government should reassert its role on immigration and pass comprehensive immigration reform which includes a new and expanded guest worker program; this would deter individual states from developing harmful, costly, and ineffective policies. Currently H1 (Specialty Occupations), H2A (Temporary Agricultural Workers) and H2B (Temporary Non-Agricultural Workers) visas allow foreign nationals to enter the U.S. for employment (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2010). The current quota, which is set at 65,000 for each type of visa, is far short of what is needed to meet the demand for immigrant labor. Until comprehensive immigration can be enacted by the federal government, the quotas for these visas should be increased to more accurately reflect labor demands. The U.S. Congress must also pass the Development, Relief, and Education, for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which would grant conditional permanent residency for undocumented students who graduate from a U.S. high school or earn their GED, and either complete at least 2 years at an institution of higher learning or military service. This would provide undocumented students with the opportunity to not only improve their lives, but to contribute fully to society through military service, increased tax revenue, and civic engagement. Increasing the number of Latino college graduates may generate an additional \$7 billion in federal tax revenue to Social Security per 10 year cohort of students (Robles, 2009).

## Conclusion

Although there are costs associated with undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., their overall economic contributions, including employment, purchases, and tax revenue generated may result in a financial benefit to the U.S. at the federal level, and for some local and state governments as well (Immigration Policy Center, 2010b, c; NCLR, 2008; Porter, 2005; Strayhorn, 2006; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). Even in states where the costs of providing services to undocumented immigrants is greater than the tax revenue generated, those costs represent less than 5% of those states' total budgets allocated for law enforcement, education, and health care (CBO, 2007), and not the huge economic drain claimed by many politicians and anti-immigrant organizations. The negative depictions of undocumented immigrants by the media and the discussion by some politicians about the economic drain of undocumented immigrants on the U.S. economy, which are based on exaggerations, the distortion of data, or incomplete information, have created a hostile environment for undocumented Latinos in the U.S. (Becerra, 2012). This has led to ineffective and costly policies that deny services to undocumented immigrants and increase immigration enforcement (CBO, 2008; NCLR, 2008; Sommers, 2010; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, n.d., U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009, 2010).

In addition, the negative public discourse surrounding undocumented immigration has led to the rise of extremist and vigilante groups such as the Minutemen. The implementation of policies, such as Arizona's SB 1070, create fear and lead to higher individual and societal costs (Androff et al., 2011; Becerra et al., 2010). These ineffective anti-immigrant policies may have exacerbated the current financial crisis faced by federal, state, and local governments. The social work profession cannot allow this population to continue to be used as scapegoats. Social workers must utilize accurate information about the economic impact of undocumented immigrants and advocate for humane policies that will help meet the demands for labor and allow undocumented immigrants to be treated fairly for their contributions to the U.S. economy.

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# Perceived Neighborhood Safety and Psychological Distress: Exploring Protective Factors

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*While a growing body of literature has established a relationship between “disordered” neighborhoods and psychological distress, less is known about the specific mechanisms at work. Using data collected in the 2008 Arizona Health Survey (N = 4,196), hierarchical linear regression was conducted to assess both the independent effect of perception of neighborhood safety on psychological distress, as well as the mediating effects of powerlessness, social isolation and mistrust. The findings suggest that the more safe individuals feel in their neighborhood, the less psychological distress they experience ( $b = 1.07$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This relationship appears to be partially mediated by feelings of powerlessness, social isolation and mistrust, indicating potential risk and protective factors.*

*Key words: Psychological distress, neighborhood safety, ecological systems theory, Arizona adults*

Mental health disorders are a leading source of disability, making it an important aspect of public health. Rates of depression and anxiety are between 10 and 20% in populations worldwide (Patel, Flisher & Cohen, 2006) with psychological disorders accounting for 12% of all disability-adjusted life years lost (Brundtland, 2000). Poor mental health has a variety

of social consequences including, but not limited to, marital instability (Kessler, Walters & Forthofer, 1998), increased teenage parenthood (Kessler et al., 1997), substance abuse (Regier et al., 1990), disruptions in social relationships (Mickelson & Kessler, 1997), and suicide (Prince et al., 2007).

In a classic study, Faris and Dunham (1939) established a relationship between some mental health outcomes and geographical location, suggesting that the environment in which a person lives may impact the development of mental health symptoms. They attributed this relationship to the lack of social infrastructure in disordered neighborhoods, which adds to the existing impact of individual-level characteristics. Although Faris and Dunham (1939) found that this relationship only held true for individuals hospitalized for psychotic and substance abuse disorders and were not able to control for individual factors, subsequent research has established a link between neighborhood environments and anxiety/depression, controlling for individual-level characteristics (Beard et al., 2009; Galea et al., 2007; Roh et al., 2011; Silver, Mulvey, & Swanson, 2002; Truong & Ma, 2006).

In a review of the literature examining the independent relationship between neighborhood characteristics and depression, thirty-seven of the forty-five studies found support for the hypothesis (Mair, Roux, & Galea, 2008). While these studies have looked at the association between disordered neighborhood and mental health, few have explored the specific relationship between perception of neighborhood safety and psychological distress. In addition, no studies, to our knowledge, have explored the secondary stressors, such as powerlessness, social isolation and mistrust, that may link the external stressor of neighborhood safety to the internalization of psychological distress.

Based on an ecological systems theory and the social stress theory perspectives, the present study approaches perception of neighborhood as one important aspect in the complex constellation of factors contributing to psychological distress. In order to do this, we examine the associations between a primary stressor, perception of neighborhood safety, and psychological distress and explore to what degree this relationship is mediated by secondary stressors, such as

powerlessness, mistrust and social isolation for adults living in Arizona.

Ecological systems theory conceives of the “environment” as nested structures with multiple layers surrounding and impacting the individual (micro, exo, and macro) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Within this system, an individual naturally strives to maintain a balance between resources and demands. According to this theory, psychological distress, which includes mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression, arises when a person is unable to re-achieve equilibrium or adapts in a way that temporarily relieves stress but leads to additional stressors (i.e., substance abuse, illegal activity) (Saleebey, 2004).

The transition from simply experiencing external stress to internalizing and experiencing psychological distress can also be understood in the context of social stress theory. Like ecological systems theory, social stress theory classically defines stress as a state of arousal resulting either from the presence of socio-environmental demands that challenge the ordinary adaptive abilities of the individual or from the absence of means to obtain something wanted or needed (Aneshensel, 1992; Pearlin, 1989). Stress is, therefore, an internal response to an external situation or stressor (Aneshensel, 1992).

In the social stress literature, a distinction has been made between two types of stressors: acute and chronic. While acute stressors rarely result in negative health outcomes or long term psychological distress (Aneshensel, 1992; Thoits, 1983), a large body of evidence has accumulated which links chronic stressors to psychological distress (Avison & Turner 1988; Downey & Van Willigen, 2005; House, Strecher, Metzner, & Robbins, 1986; Ross & Huber, 1985; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2008).

In addition to the distinction between chronic and acute stressors, there is also a distinction between primary and secondary stressors. Stressors are rarely isolated events, with every initial chronic stressor potentially having several secondary stressors that arise as a person reacts to the initial stressor (Elliott, 2000). For example, the loss of employment can be considered a primary stressor and potential secondary stressors may include marital instability, financial insecurity, a lost sense of purpose, or diminished confidence. According

to social stress theory, different experiences of secondary stressors may explain why two people who experience the same primary stressor have different levels of overall distress (Fitzpatrick & LaGory, 2003). In this study, the manifestation of distress for those living in an unsafe environment may depend on an individual's experience of secondary stressors—powerless, mistrust and social isolation—and the absence of these secondary stressors may serve as protective factors.

Although individuals may not be aware of the influence of neighborhood on their overall well-being, when disorganized, the place in which a person lives can be a chronic stressor. Increasingly, researchers have been investigating the direct relationship between neighborhood characteristics and psychological well-being, strengthening the evidence that neighborhood factors have an impact on mental health outcomes above and beyond individual characteristics (Beard et al., 2009; Elliot, 2000; Phongsavan, Chey, Bauman, Brooks, & Silove, 2006; Propper et al., 2005; Wen, Hawky, & Cacioppo, 2006). Both physical (Ellaway, Macintyre, & Kearns, 2001; Ross & Mirowsky, 2009) and social aspects (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1996; Phongsavan et al., 2006; Propper et al., 2005; Wen, Hawky, & Cacioppo, 2006) of neighborhood disorganization have been associated with an increased likelihood of poor mental health outcomes, including elevated depressive symptoms and anxiety.

More specifically, Galea et al. (2005) found that New York city residents living in neighborhoods characterized by a poorer internal environments (cracks in the wall, poor ventilation, presence of pests) and external environments (empty lots, abandoned buildings, broken windows, trash) were 29 to 58% more likely to report depression in the last 6 months and 36 to 64% more likely to report lifetime depression than persons living in neighborhoods characterized by a less disorganized physical environment. In the first study to use an experimental design to assess neighborhood effects, it was found that parents who moved to mixed income neighborhoods from high poverty neighborhoods experienced an 8% to 33% decline in psychological distress and depressive symptoms, while boys age 8-13 years of age experienced a 25% decrease in depressive/anxiety and dependency problems (Leventhal

& Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Additionally, in Los Angeles, a relationship was found between adolescents who described their neighborhoods as having ambient hazards and their reported depressive symptoms (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1996).

In addition to the direct effect via chronic stressors, perceptions of neighborhood disorganization may also have indirect effects on psychological distress by impacting the residents' coping resources, such as social cohesion (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1996; Ellaway, Macintyre, & Kearns, 2001; Faris & Dunham, 1939), trust, and power (Ahern & Galea, 2011; Ross & Mirowsky, 2009), leading to feelings of social isolation, mistrust, and powerlessness (Phongsavan et al., 2006; Ross & Jang, 2000; Stockdale et al., 2007). It has been suggested that mistrust, defined as a lack of faith and confidence in others, is a natural protective reaction to neighborhood disorder (Ross, Mirowsky, & Pribesh, 2001). This protective reaction is the secondary stressor that may occur as a result of the chronic stress of living in a threatening environment. It follows, then, that in a neighborhood where a person views neighbors as a potential threat, interactions with neighbors and supportive relationships are less likely to be formed (Liska, 1997; Stockdale et al., 2007). Lack of informal social networks and feeling socially isolated in a disordered neighborhood can also increase individuals' feelings of fear and mistrust (Ross & Jang, 2000). Because social support has been shown to buffer the effect of stressors, minimal social support may make a person susceptible to psychological distress (Brown et al., 2009; Kessler & McLeod, 1985; Stockdale et al., 2007).

In addition, an unsafe or disordered neighborhood may also lead to feelings of powerlessness—defined as the feeling that the outcomes of one's life are determined by forces outside of oneself—because neighborhood stressors create a sense that life is chaotic and full of uncontrollable threats (Geis & Ross, 1998). Bandura (2000) writes that perception of self efficacy, the conceptual opposite of feelings of powerlessness, impact an individual's ability to cope with stressful environments. A threatening neighborhood environment may also lead to feelings of powerlessness when a person is not able to move out of the area, communicating to individuals that they are not able to meet their basic need for safety (Hiroto, 1974). It follows that

perceptions of mastery or self efficacy have been found to be inversely associated with psychological distress (Aneshensel, 1992). While Sampson et al. (1997) have argued that collective efficacy, which is dependent on social cohesion and trust, is related to decreased levels of violence in a neighborhood, Ross & Mirowsky (2009) posit that disorder, including feelings of safety, impact individual feelings of efficacy, trust and social cohesion. They go on to state that it is these secondary stressors, powerlessness, mistrust and social isolation, that connect living in a disordered neighborhood and psychological distress (Ross & Mirowsky, 2009).

While these direct and indirect relationships have been explored, tested, and supported for "neighborhood disorder," previous research has tended to aggregate many neighborhood stressors, including graffiti, vacant lots, crime, loitering, and drug use, in order to characterize it as hazardous or "disordered" (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1996; Ellaway et al., 2001; Ross & Mirowsky, 2009; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004). Although aggregating stressors is helpful in determining which neighborhoods may be considered high risk, this approach makes it difficult to determine exactly what about living in a "disordered" environment impacts psychological distress.

It has been suggested that after the most basic needs of food and shelter have been met, an individual's attention naturally shifts to safety or securing one's environment (Maslow, 1987). In a discussion about a neighborhood's influence on all aspects of health, Taylor, Repetti and Seeman (1997, p. 439) define healthy environments as those "that provide safety and opportunities for social integration." In one of the few studies that have examined perceptions of safety and mental health outcomes independently, Roh and colleagues (2011) found that perceptions of neighborhood safety significantly predicted depressive symptoms among older Korean adults. Based on theory and the limited evidence available, perceptions of neighborhood safety may have a significant effect on psychological distress and should be examined independent of other neighborhood indicators.

The overall hypothesis guiding the study is that feeling unsafe in one's neighborhood will act as a primary stressor on psychological distress. Thus, the more unsafe a person feels in

his or her neighborhood, the higher the psychological distress, indicating a positive relationship. However, when feelings of trust, power, and neighborhood social support are present, the primary stressor of living in an unsafe neighborhood may not lead to psychological distress, thereby mediating the relationship and providing potential protective factors to living in disordered neighborhoods, the secondary hypothesis.

## Methods

### *Sample*

Data used in this study came from the Arizona Health Survey (AHS) collected in the early part of 2008 and sponsored by the St. Luke's Health Initiatives. The AHS, a population-based, random-digit dialing telephone survey, is intended to be representative of Arizona's non-institutionalized population living in households with a landline-based phone. A multi-stage sampling design was used and residential telephone numbers were selected within two geographic strata—Maricopa County and the remainder of Arizona. The final sample size included 3,130 adults living in Maricopa County and 1,066 living in the remainder of Arizona, totaling 4,196 adults. Within each household, one adult was randomly selected to complete the survey. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system. To maximize the response rate, letters were mailed to households selected for which addresses could be obtained prior to the telephone survey.

The overall response rate was a composite of the screener completion rate (i.e., success in introducing the survey to a household and randomly selecting an adult to be interviewed) and the extended interview completion rate (the success of getting one or more selected persons to complete the extended interview). The screener completion rate was 36.6% and the extended interview completion rate was 53.7%, resulting in a 19.2% overall response rate (Arizona Health Survey, 2008). Because AHS was not successful in obtaining a demographically representative sample of Arizonans, the data were weighted so that they could be generalized to the entire population of Arizona.

### Measures

*Psychological distress* was measured using the Kessler 6 (Kessler et al., 2002) which has been shown to be highly correlated with a clinical mental health diagnosis (Wells, Bushness, Hornblow, Joyce, & Oakley-Browne, 1989) and sociocultural variations in rates of diagnosis (Wakefield, 1999). Respondents were asked about the severity of certain signs of stress, and responses were then combined to give a score that represents a person's overall level of psychological distress. The Kessler 6 score is an aggregate of the participant's response to six questions ( $\alpha = .80$ ): (a) "About how often in the past 30 days did you feel nervous?" (b) "During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel helpless?" (c) "During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel restless or fidgety?" (d) "During the past 30 days, how often did you feel so depressed that nothing could cheer you up?" (e) "During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel that everything was an effort?" and (f) "During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel worthless?" Responses to each question were coded as 0, "None of the time," thru 4 "All of the time." The final aggregate measure ranged from 0 - 24, with higher scores indicating greater levels of psychological distress.

*Perception of Feeling Unsafe in the Neighborhood* is a subjective measure of neighborhood safety. Perception of feeling unsafe in the neighborhood was measured using the question: "Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?" with responses ranging from (1) "All of the time" to (4) "None of the time." While using objective measures of safety (i.e., amount of criminal activity in the neighborhood) is a more traditional way of conceptualizing a variety of aspects of neighborhood disorder (Macintyre & Ellaway, 2003; Ross & Mirowsky, 2009), subjective experiences and perceptions are more directly related to health (Christie-Mizell, Steelman, & Stewart, 2003) and are highly correlated with objective measures (Austin, Furr, & Spine, 2002; Ellaway, Macintyre, & Kearns, 2001; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004).

*Powerlessness* was measured with the following question, "Please tell me how often the statements were true of you over the past month... You felt in control of your life." The responses ranged from (1) "All of the time" to (5) "None of the time." In order to measure a person's level of neighborhood mistrust,

the participants were asked, "Tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement...People in my neighborhood can be trusted." The responses were given values ranging from (1) "*Strongly agree*" to (4) "*Strongly disagree*." In order to measure levels of perceived *social isolation* the following questions were considered: "Tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement... (a) "People in my neighborhood help each other out" and (b) "There are people I can count on in this neighborhood" ( $\alpha = .74$ ). The responses were given values ranging from (1) "*Strongly agree*" to (4) "*Strongly disagree*." The average value of these two questions was calculated and a mean scaled variable was constructed.

#### *Statistical Analysis*

Using Stata 10.0, hierarchal linear regressions were conducted to assess both the independent effects of perception of safety, powerlessness, social isolation and mistrust on psychological distress, as well as the mediating effects controlling for marital status, age, gender, race education and income. To test for mediation, the four-step process proposed by Barron and Kenny (1986) was used: Step 1) The relationship between perceived neighborhood safety and psychological distress was tested; Step 2) The relationship between perceived neighborhood safety and a mediator variable (powerlessness, social isolation, or mistrust) was tested; Step 3) The relationship between the mediator and psychological distress was tested; and Step 4) Both perceived neighborhood safety and a mediating variable were entered into the multiple regression equation. If the relationship between perceived neighborhood safety and psychological distress decreases when the mediator is added to the model, then mediation is present. A Sobel (1982) test was used to determine if the decrease in psychological distress observed was statistically significant. For all models, weights were applied and standard errors were adjusted by stratum, Maricopa County and all other counties, to adjust for any bias in the sampling procedure.

Results

After the data were weighted, 49% of respondents reported that they were female and 65% were married. The majority of respondents were non-Hispanic white (71%), followed by Hispanic (26%) and African American (3%). On average, participants completed some college ( $M = 14.69$ ,  $SD = 4.99$ ), were 47 years old ( $M = 46.96$ ,  $SD = 18.64$ ) and reported earnings between \$50,000 and \$60,000 a year ( $M = 7.94$ ,  $SD = 4.19$ ).

Table 1. Steps 1, 2 and 3. The Relationship between Perception of Neighborhood Safety and Psychological Distress with Powerlessness, Community Isolation, and Mistrust as Mediators

	Psychological Distress	Powerlessness	Social Isolation	Mistrust
Step 1				
Feeling unsafe in neighborhood	1.07 (.17)***			
Step 2				
Feeling unsafe in neighborhood		.22(.04)***	.20(.02)***	.28(.03)***
Step 3				
Powerlessness	1.92(.12)***			
Social Isolation	.95(.18)***			
Mistrust	.65(.16)***			

Note: all independent variables were modeled separately; all models control for marital status, age, gender, race, education and income. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

The mean Kessler 6 score was 3.85 ( $SD = 3.78$ ), indicating that on average people reported experiencing low levels of psychological distress. When asked if they felt safe in their neighborhood, 63% reported that they did all of the time, 30% reported they did most of the time, 6% reported that they did some of the time and 1% reported that they did none of the time. When asked if they felt in control of their lives, 37% of participants reported that they did all of the time, 42% reported that they did most of the time, 14% some of the time, 4% a little of the time and 3% none of the time. When asked if they agreed that “people in their neighborhood could be trusted,” 23% stated that they strongly agree, 63% reported that they agree, 10% reported that they disagree and 2% reported that they strongly disagree. The mean of the neighborhood social isolation scale

was 1.88 (SD = .59), indicating that on average people “agree” that people in their neighborhood help each other out and can be counted on.

*Step 1)* A statistically significant positive relationship was found between perceptions of feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and psychological distress when controlling for marital status, age, gender, race, education and income ( $b_1 = 1.07$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (see Table 1). As perceptions that a neighborhood is unsafe increases, psychological distress increases. This model accounted for 11.69% of the variation in psychological distress.

*Step 2)* Like Step 1, all models control for marital status, age, gender, race, education and income. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between perception of feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and feelings of powerlessness ( $b_1 = .22$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $p < .001$ ), between feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and feelings of social isolation ( $b_1 = .20$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and between feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and feelings of mistrust ( $b_1 = .28$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (See Table 1).

Table 2. Step 4. OLS Regression of Perception of Neighborhood Safety and Psychological Distress introducing Mediating Variables

	Model 1 b(SE)	Model 2 b(SE)	Model 3 b(SE)
Married	-.38(.17)*	-.58(.23)**	-.46(.23)*
Age	-.02(.00)***	-.03(.01)***	-.03(.01)***
Gender (Male)	.11(.16)	.33(.19)	.30(.20)
Race (Hispanic)	.23(.22)	-.38(.27)	-.37(.27)
Race (African American)	.03(.37)	-.07(.39)	-.32(.36)
Education	-.07(.02)***	-.07(.02)***	-.06(.02)***
Income	-.11(.02)***	-.12(.02)***	-.12(.02)***
Feeling unsafe in neighborhood	.65(.15)***	.96(.18)***	.96(.18)***
Powerlessness	1.85(.13)***		
Social Isolation		.73(.18)***	
Mistrust			.37(.16)*
Model R-Square	32.09%	13.04%	12.17%
F-test	189.09***	19.70***	5.35*
Change in R-Square	20.41%	1.13%	0.36%

Note: Dependent (outcome) variable - psychological distress (Kessler)

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

*Step 3)* As Table 1 shows and controlling for marital status, age, gender, race, education and income, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between powerlessness and psychological distress ( $b_1 = 1.92$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $p < .001$ ), between social isolation and psychological distress ( $b_1 = .95$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and between mistrust and psychological distress ( $b_1 = .65$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

*Step 4)* Table 2 presents the tests of mediation. A statistically significant positive relationship remained between perception of feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and psychological distress when testing for mediation of powerlessness ( $b_1 = .65$ ,  $SE = .15$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, it decreased from the original model ( $b_1 = 1.07$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that feelings of powerlessness partially mediate the relationship between perception of feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and psychological distress.

With the addition of powerlessness, this model accounted for 32.09% of the variation in psychological distress. When conducting a Sobel test, the indirect effect was found to be statistically significant (Sobel test statistic = 5.20,  $p < .01$ ) (not shown). A statistically significant positive relationship also remained between perception of feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and psychological distress when testing for mediation of neighborhood social isolation ( $b_1 = .73$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but again it decreased from the original model ( $b_1 = 1.07$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Feelings of social isolation partially mediate the relationship between perception of feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and psychological distress. With the addition of neighborhood social isolation, this model accounted for 13.04% of the variation in psychological distress.

The Sobel test indicated a statistically significant indirect effect (Sobel test statistic = 4.67,  $p < .01$ ) (not shown). A statistically significant positive relationship remained between perception of feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and psychological distress when testing for mediation of mistrust ( $b_1 = .96$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and, like powerlessness and neighborhood social isolation, decreased from the original model ( $b_1 = 1.07$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and indicates that feelings of social isolation partially mediates the relationship between perceptions of feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and psychological distress.

With the addition of mistrust, this model accounted for 12.17% of the variation in psychological distress. The Sobel test indicated the indirect effect was statistically significant (Sobel test statistic = 3.72,  $p < .01$ ) (not shown).

## Discussion

Adding to the growing body of literature examining the relationships between neighborhood factors and mental health, the purpose of this study was to examine the specific association between perceptions of neighborhood safety and psychological distress. The hypothesis that a person's perception of neighborhood safety is positively associated with psychological distress was confirmed, indicating the more unsafe a person feels in their neighborhood, the more psychological distress he or she reports. This finding is consistent with previous studies that found that neighborhood factors are associated with mental health outcomes (Eliot, 2000; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Phongsavan et al., 2006; Propper et al., 2005; Wen et al., 2006), however this study provides new information about the importance of perception of neighborhood safety when discussing the impact of neighborhood disorganization on individual mental health outcomes. The relationship found between perception of neighborhood safety and psychological distress supports social stress theory in its assertion that chronic stressors which occur outside of the individual are related to internalized feelings of distress (Ahern & Galea, 2011; Fitzpatrick & LaGory, 2003). While the implied direction of the relationship is based on ecological systems theory and supported by previous research (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), causal conclusions cannot be made due to the cross-sectional nature of the data. Despite the inability to make concrete causal claims, this study establishes a relationship between perception of safety and psychological distress and suggests that more research is needed to investigate how this aspect of the neighborhood environment impacts mental health.

In addition, this study aimed to test the mediating effects of social isolation, mistrust and powerlessness on the relationship between perceived neighborhood safety and psychological distress. Social isolation, mistrust and powerlessness were all found to have statistically significant mediating effects on

the relationship between psychological distress and perception of neighborhood safety, supporting the second hypothesis and assertions made in previous literature (Ross & Mirowsky, 2009). In the context of social stress theory, these findings suggest that mistrust, social isolation and powerlessness may be a reaction (secondary stressor) to feeling unsafe (primary stressor). The mediating relationship found further suggests that this reaction is a link between the environment and the internalization of stress.

Secondary stressors could provide an explanation to the ecological fallacy that asserts that it is false to assume that all people in a high-risk neighborhood will experience negative outcomes (Wheaton & Clarke, 2003). Again, while conclusions about causation cannot be made, these findings do suggest that trust, social support and self-efficacy can offer protection to individuals experiencing the primary stressor of feeling unsafe in their neighborhood from experiencing psychological distress. For social work, understanding this mediating effect can be applied to creating interventions which increase social support, trust and power in neighborhoods where individuals report feeling unsafe, thus potentially impacting some mental health outcomes. In order to test the hypotheses about causal mechanisms, randomized control trials of interventions that target these areas are needed; however, for people who are living in environments that are unsafe and are not able to be altered, increasing feeling of support, power and trust may be one mechanism to improve overall levels of psychological distress.

It should also be noted that while it was found that powerlessness, social isolation and mistrust all mediate the relationship between feeling unsafe in one's neighborhood and psychological distress, there appears to be a difference between the potential impacts of each of these factors when examining the effect sizes of each model. The model that included powerlessness accounted for 32.09% total variation in psychological distress, a 20.41% increase over the model that includes the controls and feeling unsafe. This can be compared to the 1.13% and .36% increase in overall variance accounted for when social isolation and trust are added respectively. While tests were not conducted to test if these differences in effect sizes were

statistically significant, powerlessness appears to account for more of the variation in the psychological distress and therefore may have the largest overall impact if targeted in the creation of an intervention.

### *Limitations & Future Research*

It should be noted that this study focuses on subjective neighborhood perceptions rather than geographical location or objective measures. Although it is unclear what impacts a person's perception of neighborhood safety, it is reasonable to hypothesize, based on previous research (Austin et al., 2002; Ellaway, Macintyre, & Kearns, 2001; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004), that physical environment plays a substantial role. Previous studies have shown that not only are subjective measures of environment highly correlated with objective measures of neighborhood disorders, but also that subjective reality affects behavior and beliefs more directly. While this may limit the scope of the conclusions, we do not believe that it jeopardizes the overall significance of the findings.

In addition, this study was also limited by the sampling techniques that may have biased the sample. The use of landlines rather than cell phones selected out a potentially large portion of the population that could be both younger, due to their tendency to use cell phones, and of lower socioeconomic status, who may not be able to afford landlines. These issues with sampling might lead to results that are not accurately representative of Arizona's population as a whole and may not be fully capturing the experiences of ethnic minority groups and rural populations. Some of these limitations were addressed when weighting the sample but should still be considered when looking at the findings. Another limitation of the study was the use of single items to measure mistrust, perceptions of safety and powerlessness. Although the measures used have face validity, multiple items would help to insure the validity and reliability of these measures.

Although the findings of this study gives us insight into the relationship between perception of safety and psychological distress, it raises questions that still need to be explored. The main questions raised concern causation and the direction of the relationship found. Future research should assess

what drives a person's perceptions of safety. Although it is reasonable to make the inference that a person's perception of safety is primarily influenced by the objective neighborhood environment in which they live, it is also possible that their perception is affected by the media, history of victimization and/or mental health diagnosis (i.e., schizophrenia). In addition, this research would be strengthened by the inclusion of both objective and subjective measures of neighborhood. Future research should match a person's subjective reports of feeling unsafe with objective measures of the neighborhood, such as crime rates or neighborhood socioeconomic status, to determine if concerns about safety cluster in neighborhoods that are characterized as "disordered." Future research should also explore what measures most effectively capture neighborhood disorder and have the biggest impact on those living in that neighborhood.

### *Conclusions*

While a growing body of literature has established that social context matters in mental health outcomes, few studies have examined the specific mechanisms that impact those outcomes. This study adds to the existing body of literature that has examined the relationship between neighborhood factors on mental health by being the first, to our knowledge, to test the relationship between perceptions of neighborhood safety and psychological distress and explore possible protective factors. The significant mediating relationships found in this study suggest possible protective and risk factors that can be targeted in interventions, potentially improving mental health outcomes for individuals living in unsafe neighborhoods. Understanding specific neighborhood factors that impact mental health enabled us to design more effective interventions and is crucial to addressing mental health disparities.

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# Social Ties, Social Support, and Collective Efficacy among Families from Public Housing in Chicago and Baltimore

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*This paper explores the social ties and capital of women relocating to low-poverty neighborhoods through the Moving to Opportunity program and a "regular mover" group who did not. Findings suggest the low-poverty movers seldom made close ties in their new neighborhoods; they also had fewer childhood friends and exchanged less support than the regular movers. Many, however, welcomed escaping the constant exchange that characterized their former neighborhoods and moved to areas higher in collective efficacy—experiencing neighborhoods rated high in child supervision, facing less conflictual relations with neighbors, and exhibiting greater trust in others—relative to the regular movers.*

**Key words:** *social ties, social support, collective efficacy, public housing, Baltimore, Chicago*

Over the last decade and a half, tens of thousands of people have moved from public housing developments through federally- and locally-sponsored housing mobility initiatives such as HOPE VI and Moving to Opportunity (Popkin et al., 2004).

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The implementation of these policies has resulted in a marked transformation in the physical landscapes of many cities, particularly in those (like Baltimore and Chicago) where many of the high-rise developments have been demolished and thousands of families relocated to two- or three-story housing units. Redevelopment and housing mobility policies have also transformed the social landscapes of individual families and, potentially, the neighborhoods where they once lived or currently live. In fact, recent housing policies partially rest on the assumption that such transformations will not only occur but will benefit relocated families. The idea behind these policies is that relocating families into less-disadvantaged neighborhoods will result in improved social ties, resources, opportunities, and, therefore, well-being. Nevertheless, some, especially those familiar with previous federal initiatives such as urban renewal (see Gans, 1962), might argue that despite recognizing the importance of social ties for mobility, the massive relocation of families typically has failed to consider adequately the existing social networks of those who are being moved.

In these analyses, we investigate the social ties and the deployment of resources made available through them (i.e., social capital) for two sets of low-income public housing residents who moved under different circumstances. One group received a Section 8 voucher (now called a Housing Choice Voucher) which required that they rent a unit from a private landlord in a low-poverty neighborhood (the tenant pays a portion of the rent based on her income, with the government covering the remainder up to a certain threshold). Another group did not receive this restricted voucher but, nonetheless, usually moved after the public housing in which they lived was demolished as part of other housing initiatives, such as HOPE VI.

Overall, our findings suggest that changes in social ties and social capital occurred for those families who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods. Most notably, the analyses indicate that this group may have experienced a significant loss of social support social capital at the individual level (e.g., assistance with cash). On the surface, this may be cause for concern, as one might worry that these relocated families would struggle, for instance, to make ends meet after having lost some in-kind and cash support to which they might have been

accustomed. We find, however, that many of the respondents did not lament these changes in social support—instead, they saw moving as a welcome opportunity to disrupt the social exchange networks in which they were once embedded and had felt trapped. Moreover, we find some indications that the low-poverty movers were living in neighborhoods at least slightly higher in collective efficacy—they were more likely to describe having more positive and less conflict-ridden interactions with neighbors (especially regarding children's behavior) and were less likely to distrust others in their communities. These findings highlight the importance not only of investigating how relocation might influence the social ties of relocated families, but also hearing directly from those being relocated about how they interpret any such changes that occur.

### Literature Review

Whether policy-makers push for investment in low-income neighborhoods or advocate for families to move out of high-poverty ones into more advantaged areas, the underlying assumption is that place matters for the well-being of families. Wilson (1987, 1996) argued that neighborhood disadvantage results in individual disadvantage, as residents of high-poverty neighborhoods are socially isolated from the mainstream world of educational and job opportunities. Moreover, he suggested that the quality of resources embedded in an individual's personal social network may be contingent on neighborhood-level factors.

Those interested in "neighborhood effects" often employ the concept of social capital—or the "resources embedded in social relations that actors can use to garner benefits and improve their life chances" (Offer & Schneider, 2007, p. 1126). As Domínguez and Watkins note (2003), the concept has been invoked to analyze processes at the individual level (e.g., to analyze poor mothers' coping strategies), as well as at the aggregate level (e.g., to analyze neighborhood social organization, see Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). At the individual level, two types of social capital exist—bridging or leverage social capital and bonding or support social capital (Briggs, 1998; Warren, Thompson, & Saegert, 2001). Leverage social capital includes resources or information that help people with

social mobility (e.g., a lead on a good job), whereas support social capital characterizes the assistance that people receive from their ties to survive (e.g., food). Neighborhoods can shape individual-level social capital, as high-poverty neighborhoods may compromise social interaction if individuals mistrust one another, disengage from the local environs because they are fearful, and/or move in and out of areas before long-standing ties form (Ross, Mirowsky, & Pribesh, 2001; Wilson, 1987, 1996).

Research also suggests, however, that those living in high-poverty neighborhoods might actually have a greater reason than those living in moderate- to low-poverty areas to form attachments and maintain close ties with others as they try to survive and solve local problems (Stack, 1974; Suttles, 1972). Thus, while it is true that their social networks may be highly local, dense, and homogeneous and not the type generally associated with enabling upward mobility (Dominguez & Watkins, 2003; Stack, 1974), individuals living in poor communities may have many close ties, interact with others often, and commit a great deal of resources and time to their personal relationships. These social networks may then act as a private safety net, providing low-income families with in-kind and financial assistance (such as cash loans and gifts, food, transportation, clothing, housing, and childcare), as well as emotional and informational support (Edin & Lein, 1997; Henly, Danziger, & Offer, 2005; Lein, Benjamin, McManus, & Roy, 2005; Scott, Edin, London, & Kissane, 2004; Stack, 1974).

At the aggregate level, social capital is an attribute of a collective, where prevailing norms, trust, and social relations are employed for the public good or community benefit (Putnam, 2000). A related concept, which we employ in this analysis, is collective efficacy. Collective efficacy includes "active engagement" by the individual and community and is a "task-specific construct," while social capital focuses on the *potential* resources in one's network (Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999, p. 635). Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997, p. 918) contend that collective efficacy—"social cohesion among neighbors" and a willingness to work for common values—is a critical neighborhood-level indicator of neighborhood disadvantage (or advantage). Communities with high levels of collective efficacy are characterized by neighbors who trust one another and look out for each other—watching each other's children

when they are in public space and intervening when problems arise.

Improving the level of collective efficacy that poor individuals experience may not be the primary aim of housing mobility and poverty deconcentration efforts. However, it is likely that advocates of such policies, in line with the research that suggests concentrated affluence is positively associated with collective efficacy (Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999), assume that relocated families will come to reside in areas higher in collective efficacy when they move to low-poverty areas. No study, of which we know, has studied this topic qualitatively and in depth. More common, though still limited, are studies that investigate issues related to the social ties and individual-level social capital of people who participated in housing initiatives. Studies that exist in this vein typically explore whether individuals lost connections with others or were able to make new ties after relocation, with a handful investigating changes in exchange activities. Some of these analyses use data from the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) housing mobility demonstration. After volunteering for MTO, residents living in public housing or Section 8 project-based housing located in extremely poor neighborhoods in Baltimore, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Boston were randomly assigned into one of three groups. The “experimental group” received housing counseling and a special voucher that could only be used in census tracts with 1990 poverty rates of less than 10 percent. A second treatment group received a regular voucher with no geographic restrictions. A third group, the “controls,” received no voucher through MTO, although they could remain in their public housing units or apply for other housing assistance that became available to them (e.g., a regular Section 8 voucher).

Pettit (1999, 2004) examined the impact of MTO on social connections for families in Los Angeles 6 to 10 months after the program move. While she acknowledges that she cannot account for the location of social ties in her data, she finds that most relocated families were able to construct new social ties in the short term. Pettit (2004) also suggests that neighborhood-level factors promoted interaction among the residents. In particular, she argues, “Moving to low-poverty, safe neighborhoods enabled [MTO] parents and their children to make social connections—relationships with friends and

neighbors and linkages to institutions" (Pettit, 2004, p. 298). Moreover, survey follow-up on MTO families in five cities revealed no differences between the experimental and control group adults in neighboring activities or in the proportion of individuals with three or more close friends (Orr et al., 2003). Notably, though, the experimental group was significantly more likely to have college-educated friends or friends earning more than \$30,000 (Orr et al., 2003), an indication that the MTO treatment improved the chances of having friends with more resources, and, perhaps, the potential for leverage social capital.

Recent work from the three-city MTO qualitative study (based on research in the Boston, Los Angeles, and New York sites) indicates a wide array of network arrangements among those MTO families who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods. Some of these families centered their networks on kin who lived outside of their MTO placement neighborhoods; others avoided kin and focused their networks on friends they made at work, during childhood, or in former neighborhoods. For some, the move was problematic as it strained communication and coordination with their networks, but for others, moving away from "needy" ties was experienced as relief (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010).

Research on families who moved through HOPE VI has found that relocated individuals frequently experience a loss in their social ties and a decrease in exchange activity (Curley, 2009; Greenbaum, Hathaway, Rodriguez, Spalding, & Ward, 2008; Clampet-Lundquist, 2004). In their study of two Tampa neighborhoods receiving relocated HOPE VI families, Greenbaum et al. (2008) found that adults experienced a decline in neighborhood social ties after their relocation. Moreover, they reported less exchange with neighbors, as adults instead were relying more on exchange within their kinship networks. Similarly, Clampet-Lundquist (2004) documented that individuals who moved through HOPE VI in Philadelphia experienced a decline in local ties and support exchange. And, in her longitudinal investigation of low-income women relocated through HOPE VI in East Boston, Curley (2009, p. 242) found that "relocation resulted in less instrumental and emotional support (which in turn had a detrimental effect on

some women's economic stability and mental health)" but that for some, relocation provided a way to sever ties that were experienced as "draining."

Recent research has begun to unpack how housing mobility policies affect poor women's social ties and individual-level social capital. In this paper, we seek to contribute to this growing, yet still relatively small, literature through a qualitative examination of the experiences of poor women in two MTO sites (Chicago and Baltimore) in which researchers have not previously studied these topics in depth. We also further expand this literature by investigating whether the low-poverty movers lived in neighborhoods characterized by high collective efficacy and by offering a comparison of social support for two groups of individuals relocated under different circumstances. The rich qualitative data allow for a detailed account of these issues, permit unexpected findings to emerge, and provide an opportunity to investigate how the participants themselves interpreted any changes they experienced.

## Method

In this article, we examine the following broad research questions: What are the implications for social ties, social support, and collective efficacy for women who move from high-poverty to low-poverty neighborhoods compared to those who do not make such a move? How do such women interpret any changes that emerge across these areas? And, how might we explain any changes that seem to exist?

To address these questions, we use data from the MTO qualitative study in Baltimore and Chicago, in which a random subsample of MTO participants were interviewed 6 to 9 years after having signed up for the demonstration. In all, 233 families were included in this sample. The research team completed interviews with 188 adult respondents across the two cities—124 in Baltimore and 64 in Chicago—for a response rate of 81%.

All families in the MTO experimental group received vouchers to move to a low-poverty neighborhood, but across the five cities, just under half actually used their vouchers. Thus, here, we focus our analyses on those families that used a

MTO voucher to move to a low-poverty neighborhood (henceforth, “low-poverty movers”) and those that were not given a voucher through the program to move (henceforth, “regular movers”). We chose to restrict the sample in this way primarily because we were interested in exploring qualitatively how a low-poverty move might relate to social support and collective efficacy (i.e., in quantitative language, a treatment-on-treated analysis), not how assignment to a particular program group, per se, might relate to these issues (i.e., an intent-to-treat analysis). Moreover, the sampling design in Chicago did not include those in the experimental group who did not make a program move. We understand that our decision to limit the analysis in this way prevents us from exploiting the full benefits of MTO’s experimental design. We cannot, for instance, determine if the low-poverty movers differed from those who were offered the MTO voucher but who did not make a program move in ways that influence our results. Other analyses of the MTO data have revealed that the low-poverty mover group was more likely to be younger, enrolled in school, living in smaller households, and dissatisfied with their baseline neighborhood environments than those in the low-poverty group who did not use their MTO voucher (Clampet-Lundquist & Massey, 2008).

Our goal is to compare two groups of people who spent time raising their families in extremely high-poverty neighborhoods but who moved under different circumstances. One group (the “low-poverty movers”) moved to a low-poverty neighborhood through MTO (they were required to live there for at least 1 year), while the other group (the “regular movers”) experienced “normal” housing policy during this time—staying in their developments, moving out with an unrestricted housing voucher, or moving to another public housing development. Notably, housing authorities destroyed and revitalized the developments in which the majority of the sample had lived at baseline, and, indeed, the families who originally signed up for MTO were quite mobile in the years following the start of the demonstration (much like other families struggling to find affordable shelter in unstable and, at times, exploitative low-income rental markets). In fact, 92% of those assigned to the control group in Baltimore and Chicago (our “regular movers”) moved since the start of the demonstration.

In all, our subsample includes 133 respondents—71 regular movers and 62 low-poverty movers. Interviews with these respondents were conducted between July 2003 and August 2004, with interviewers using an in-depth interview instrument to explore each respondent's neighborhood, social status, employment, children, and health. On average, these tape-recorded interviews took 2 to 5 hours to complete. Generally, we conducted the interviews in the respondents' homes, paying them \$50 to \$85, depending on household type. To ensure confidentiality, we use pseudonyms chosen by the respondents throughout the paper.

The two groups of respondents were remarkably similar across a number of basic characteristics at the time of the interviews, including median age (39 years old), median number of children (three children), and median length of time residing at their current address (3 years). Furthermore, over half of the respondents were employed at the time of the interview (59% of the regular movers and 63% of the low-poverty movers), with most of these women working full-time (71% of the employed regular movers and 62% of the employed low-poverty movers). The majority had achieved a high school diploma or GED (55% of the regular movers and 58% of the low-poverty movers), with only a small subset having received an associate's or bachelor's degree (4% of the regular movers and 7% of the low-poverty movers).

Importantly, the families in the low-poverty mover group, on average, were living in less disadvantaged neighborhoods than the regular mover group at the time of the interviews, which was 6 to 9 years after joining the demonstration. The census tracts in which the low-poverty mover group lived in 2003 and 2004 had a higher percentage of persons with an associate's degree or better (20.7% versus 14.3%), lower percentage of persons below the poverty line (20.9% versus 34.4%), and higher percentage of persons employed (51% versus 42.8%) than those in which the regular movers lived. All of these were statistically significant differences (at  $p < .05$ ,  $p < .001$ , and  $p < .001$  levels respectively). Thus, while many of the members of both groups had moved multiple times after joining the MTO demonstration, the low-poverty movers were still in less poor neighborhoods than the regular movers when we talked to them in 2003 and 2004.

A team of trained graduate students performed preliminary coding of the transcribed interviews, entering them into a Microsoft Access database. These initial codes were primarily descriptive rather than analytic. One of these descriptive fields, for example, was "friends," in which all data related to the friends or acquaintances of the respondents were placed. If a respondent identified family members as friends, this was included as well. We imported this field, as well as one that captured any discussion of exchange of resources, protective observation and supervision of property or children, and interactions with neighbors regarding children into QSR NVivo, along with quantitative descriptor variables for each respondent (what NVivo refers to as "attributes").

All subsequent coding and analyses occurred through NVivo, in which we analyzed the data in line with an inductive, grounded theory approach, where findings emerge from the data themselves rather than from predetermined hypotheses (see Charmaz, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, for details on this analytic approach). Accordingly, we began by coding the interview text into various conceptual categories (or what NVivo refers to as "nodes") until we reached theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As new nodes emerged in our analyses, we returned to text that was previously coded to ensure uniformity in our coding across cases. We then re-examined the data to explore patterns across the codes and cases and to develop an overall account that would accurately portray the lived experience of the respondents.

## Results

### *Close Social Ties*

When public housing empties through voluntary or mandatory means, a concern is that families may experience a net loss of close ties as they lose touch with friends and family from their old neighborhoods and fail to make ties in their new ones to replace them. This may be of particular concern when families move some distance away from their original public housing addresses, as in the case of the low-poverty movers in our sample. We find, however, that neither group appeared bereft of close social ties—about half of the low-poverty movers could identify currently having at least three close ties,

compared to about 60% of the regular movers. Notably, some of these close ties were with biological family members, but many were with individuals whom scholars commonly refer to as fictive kin (Stack, 1974).

Similar to accounts of MTO respondents in other cities (Briggs et al., 2010), our respondents in Baltimore and Chicago discussed a number of ways by which they had met their current close ties, including meeting them through work, church, mutual acquaintances, and various programs (e.g., drug rehabilitation). One of the most common ways that both the low-poverty and regular movers claimed that they had met their current close ties, however, was as adults “from the neighborhood.” In essence, they described how close relationships developed over time from running into the same individuals over and over or from other mechanisms by which “the neighborhood” threw adults together. For example, LaShea, a Chicago low-poverty mover, explained how she became friends with two women (to whom she still is close despite her moving):

Truthfully, I met them [while] living in the projects... [our kids] ended up putting us at different times together ... we had our babies, we put them in [the same] daycare, then we didn't live that far, you know, almost directly across from each other, then we started going to school, to get our GED and we ended up in the same class.

Few of the low-poverty movers (and the regular movers as well), however, expressed that they had met a currently identified close tie from living in their current neighborhood; rather, those close ties that they reported having met “through the neighborhood” as adults, as in LaShea's example, were generally ones that they had made from living in other neighborhoods, most often while living in the projects. This indicates that an important mechanism of bridging social capital may be lacking, as the low poverty movers were not forming close ties with their present neighbors. It should be remembered, however, that the respondents, on average, had only resided in their current neighborhoods for 3 years, which may not be enough time for such ties to develop.

Additionally, some respondents reported that they had met a current close tie not as adults but from “growing up.” These respondents discussed becoming close to someone while they were children, often through interactions during elementary, middle school, and high school. They also emphasized that such long-standing relationships provided a level of understanding that others did not, largely because they had been “through so much” with their childhood friends over the years. For example, Alanda, a regular mover from Chicago, explained about one of her close ties, “Well, we grew up together, so she understands me more so than anybody.”

Notably, the most common way that the regular movers claimed they had met their current close ties was from “growing up.” Moreover, they were twice as likely as the low-poverty movers to have a close tie that they met this way as children, suggesting that moving to a low-poverty neighborhood may be more disruptive to these sorts of ties than a regular move. Thus, if there is any support for a social disruption hypothesis (Pettit, 2004), it exists only for a subset of ties in this study—those made as children. As long-term, close connections may enhance the exchange of material and nonmaterial aid, the findings here provide a potential explanation for the differences in social support that we report next.

#### *Individual Social Support*

The respondents talked about a range of resources they exchanged with their network ties, which we categorized under the rubric of social support. All in all, they reported exchanging slightly more nonmaterial than material assistance—over three-quarters had given or received nonmaterial support, but less than three-fifths had given or received material support. They also reported receiving help more than giving it, although one should note that the interviewers focused more on receipt of help than the giving of it in the interviews.

When we compared the regular movers with the low-poverty movers, we found that the regular movers were more likely than the low-poverty movers to exchange social support, with some variation by type. Yet, it is not as simple a story as critics of housing mobility policy suggested when they warned that social support would plummet as people moved

from their local social networks. In fact, the stories shared from the women in our sample reveal that some of them (both in the regular mover and the low-poverty mover groups) were relieved to move away from needy ties or from an environment where local norms encouraged heavy exchange.

*Exchange among Social Ties*

All in all, the regular movers gave and received a great deal of social support. Some was intangible, such as offering emotional support to a friend or family member. In fact, about 90% of the regular movers discussed how they gave or received emotional support within their social networks. Melissa, a regular mover living in Baltimore, for instance, told us how she supported one of her friends who lived nearby:

[My buddy is] the one that really needs some help. She's just going through [a lot]. I called her a couple days ago just to see how she's doing, and she's just really down and depressed, talking about how she's ready to give her kids away 'cause they don't listen to her. They disrespectful, and it's like she's really going through a lot and she doesn't [get] no support ... So it's like a lot of that comes down on her sometimes, and she goes through it, and I try to talk to her and really be a good friend to her.

The vast majority of regular movers (70%) also reported receiving help with babysitting. Typical among them were cases like Granny Ann, a Baltimore resident, who reported having a friend who would watch her grandchildren, as well as get them ready for and pick them up from school when she worked. She described how appreciative she was to have this person in her life:

It's a very good friend that, through everything I've been through, that he was right there for me, you know, he's just been my friend. And if I call him and say, "Do me a favor, I gotta run to the market, come watch the kids," [snaps fingers] he'll be there like that.

Exchanging tangible support, such as food, housing, cash,

transportation, and other in-kind items (such as clothing or appliances) was also quite common among the regular movers. For example, when we asked Billie, a Baltimore regular mover, how often her friend lent her money, she replied, "Almost ever[y] pay period, or something ... we running low on money before it's time to get paid, you know, I can borrow a couple dollars from her." Tammy, also a regular mover in Baltimore, told us that her friend "probably need[s] me more than I need her because of her [drug] situation. So therefore, I help her with her children, food, money, whatever, support, anything. You know, 'cause we're just friends. And she helps me with absolutely nothing [*laughs*]."

While, certainly, most of the low-poverty movers were involved in some type of social support exchange, particularly the receipt of emotional support (where regular movers and controls were comparable), our data suggest that, overall, they were giving and receiving less social support than their regular mover counterparts. In fact, the low-poverty movers were about a quarter less likely to have received childcare from others, a third less likely to have received cash or housing assistance (e.g., allowed to double up with someone), about half as likely to have received transportation help, and about half as likely to have received other in-kind items. Furthermore, the low-poverty movers were almost a third less likely than the regular movers to report giving emotional support and advice to others, half as likely to provide childcare for others, and almost two-thirds less likely to have given cash to others.

One important type of intangible resource that can flow through social ties is information or connections that may lead to jobs. Policymakers predicted that the low-poverty movers would be able to access improved resources and social connections for jobs (bridging or leverage social capital), yet the data indicate this has not occurred. We found no difference in the proportion of regular movers and low-poverty movers who gave or received information about jobs through their close ties (about a third of each group did so), and nothing to suggest that the low-poverty movers were leveraging better job opportunities from their social ties than the regular movers, as the low-poverty movers held similar types of jobs (in terms of wages and working conditions) as the regular movers at

the time of the interviews. These results are consistent with Turney, Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, & Duncan's (2006) research on the MTO Baltimore sample, where they found that low-poverty movers typically used friends and family outside of the low-poverty neighborhoods for information on jobs, and that neighbors were more likely to have jobs and careers that were not accessible to the low-poverty movers due to lack of education.

### *Norms around Exchange*

All in all, the data suggest that more of the regular movers, relative to the low-poverty movers, were immersed at the time of the interviews in the kind of exchange networks described decades ago in Carol Stack's (1974) seminal ethnography, *All Our Kin*, in which poor individuals feel obliged to both give and receive material and non-material aid to survive. Accordingly, one could interpret the comparably lower social support among the low-poverty movers negatively—that these movers were missing out on the kind of support desperately needed when poor. But, as researchers have found in other locales (Briggs et al., 2010; Curley, 2009), our analyses reveal that for many of the low-poverty movers (and some regular movers as well), relocating provided the welcomed opportunity to remove themselves from draining reciprocal relationships. Entering into a new neighborhood, these respondents chose not to give out food or cash to their new neighbors because, as Mariah, a low-poverty mover who has remained in her first low-poverty Baltimore suburb, put it, "it starts up something." They also avoided asking their new neighbors for help or, at times, interacting with them much at all, concerned this would instigate a never-ending exchange cycle. Shawnies, a low-poverty mover, for example, described why she does not get involved in exchange networks: "I'm not gonna go to nobody and borrow no sugar...if you tend to start borrowing from somebody, it seem like they always wanna borrow more."

Moreover, many of the low poverty movers perceived differences in exchange norms across the neighborhoods in which they had lived. These neighborhoods represented a wider socioeconomic variation than those through which the regular movers passed, with much lower poverty levels. When

asked about exchanging support, those who had moved often replied, "That's ghetto," and in doing so, differentiated their new neighborhoods from where they used to live. Stacey, a Baltimore low-poverty mover, described borrowing as "project business" and claimed, "You don't do that junk around here." Thus, while a few bemoaned the lack of exchange in their present neighborhoods, for many, it was a relief to be out of an environment where the norm consisted of neighbors asking to borrow items as varied as money, milk, or a mop.

All things considered, a number of factors likely contributed to the differences we observed in social support. Though both the low-poverty movers and the regular movers (for the most part) moved out of their baseline neighborhoods, the low-poverty movers had a voucher to support a more radical move (i.e., to a low-poverty neighborhood farther from their baseline address); and, in fact, the low-poverty movers were indeed living, on average, farther away from their baseline neighborhoods than regular movers years after random assignment (Turney et al., 2006). It seems likely, therefore, that those social ties at greatest risk to dissolve with such moves would be those with the most disadvantaged individuals, as they may not be able to afford traveling to the areas where their friends and family lived. While we cannot test this claim with the available data, a net loss of needy ties would likely result in the low-poverty movers giving less social support than their regular mover counterparts did, as we found in this analysis. Moreover, the fact that the regular movers were more likely to report having met their close ties as children leads us to believe that the low-poverty movers' relocation severed some long-standing relationships (e.g., ties that were made as children) that previous research and our data suggest are particularly receptive to social support exchange. Additionally, the differences in social support may relate to how the low-poverty movers considered whether exchange was appropriate in their new neighborhoods and whether they wanted to develop new neighborhood-based exchange networks or maintain certain previous ones. Interestingly, previous research indicates that those in the MTO experimental group who felt dissatisfied about their baseline neighborhoods were more likely to use their voucher (Clampet-Lundquist & Massey, 2008), and,

perhaps, some of the dissatisfaction was related to norms of exchange.

### *Neighborhood Collective Efficacy*

One of the hopes of housing mobility programs like MTO is that when people move, they will land in neighborhoods abundant in social capital. While we recognize that neighborhood-level social capital can be operationally defined in many ways, here we focus on two related indicators commonly associated with collective efficacy to look more specifically at network resources in action for a common good—the amount and kind of supervision witnessed in regard to neighborhood children and the degree of trust felt towards others in the neighborhood.

When discussing whether other residents could be counted upon to watch out for each other or for each other's children, many of the regular movers responded that they could not. Patty, a Baltimore regular mover who lives in a Section 8 apartment, for example, argued that "nobody looks out for the next person[s] kids around here. They don't. They don't. They see things happening in this area dealing with kids, and they don't care. That's how they feel, it ain't my child."

Moreover, the regular movers often described having to interact with other parents about fights and threats among children and discussed at length the problematic nature of dealing with other parents in their communities. More specifically, they described avoiding bringing issues to other parents because such interactions were viewed as: (1) futile, because the parents did not care how their children acted or would deny that their children did anything wrong and (2) dangerous, because they might lead to physical or verbal confrontations with the parents. Kristine, a regular mover in Baltimore, argued that sometimes parents are in denial about their children and alluded to the potential for conflict,

I have a real problem because when I see kids doing stuff, I [want to] be like, "What are you doing? Excuse me." But who their parents are, no [you can't do that]. And no, you don't know people like that. People don't like you coming in and telling them what their kid is doing and what their kid wasn't doing 'cause they ain't trying to hear it ... It's like that type of aggressiveness.

You know, where I don't particularly feel comfortable even getting involved in or trying to get involved in that.

The interviews also revealed that many members of the regular mover group distrusted others—both in their neighborhoods and generally. Some worried that getting close to others would invite gossiping or people getting in their “business.” Robin, a Baltimore regular mover, explained why she didn't have many people in her life to whom she felt close: “I communicate and talk to them [people around her], but to me they could still be back-stabbers, you know, they just maybe wanna be in your business, then before you know it, they're telling somebody.” The case of Charnette, a Baltimore regular mover, illustrates nicely how some might close themselves off so completely from others near them that they may not even notice the potential for close ties around them. Charnette failed to notice for 8 months that one of her friends (from a previous neighborhood) moved in next door. She explains how this could happen.

If you, you just come down the street, and I wouldn't look at you dead in your face ... never look up, never, I never look up to people ... One night she said, she called me by my name and I said, “Oh, my God, all this time [she's been living next door].” [*laughter*]

As a contrast, many of the low-poverty movers described living in communities where people looked out for one another and were more likely than the regular movers to be in neighborhoods where we classified supervision of children as “high” based on the interviews. In these “high supervision” neighborhoods, respondents claimed they could count on others to watch their children and to intervene if issues arose. For instance, Joyce, a low-poverty mover who now owns her home in Baltimore, claimed, “Everybody watch out for the children ... I can let him [my 2-year old] go outside, and I really don't even necessarily have to stay out on the porch to watch him, 'cause I know ... one of those families are out there, they watching the children.” Similarly, Janelle, a low-poverty mover in Chicago, told us, “I know so many people around here, and so ... people do come and tell me what they're doing.

And I like that ...because like certain things my boys can't get away with because somebody going to come tell on them."

Moreover, many of the low-poverty movers described congenial interactions with parents in the neighborhood. Catrina, who still lives in her low-poverty MTO placement neighborhood in the Chicago suburbs, told us, "Out here, it's like us parents as parents, we can get along with each other and we can talk ... It's like a family." Tisha, a low-poverty mover who owns a home on a quiet block in Baltimore, recounted a recent experience which exemplifies Catrina's comment about getting along—even when problems arise.

One little boy busted my basement window ... I went to the mother ... She said, "Give the receipt, get the window fixed, whatever you got to do, and we will pay for it." So when I did get the window fixed, I gave the receipt today, the next day my money was in my mailbox. And she was really apologetic to me.

A number of the low-poverty movers were quick to note how dealing with issues surrounding children was quite different in their previous high-poverty neighborhoods—contexts, remember, where many of the regular movers continued to parent. Mariah, a low-poverty mover living in a Baltimore suburb, recalled a situation where her son fought with girls about twice his age, and she decided to talk to the girls' mother:

I'm about ready to go down there and really get crazy [with the girls' mother] ... And, anyway, the mom called me on the phone and say, "You know what, if my girls give you any more problem, call the police on them." ... I felt better then ... See that's one thing about moving to that [low-poverty] area, I learned I had time to think before acting. In the city too much going on, you ain't [have] no time to be doing no thinking.

Furthermore, while there were some low-poverty movers that indicated they had problems trusting others, as a group, they were half as likely as the regular movers to report that trust caused problems for their maintaining or forming relationships with friends, family, and neighbors. Given that the regular movers were living in more disadvantaged

neighborhoods at the time of the interviews across a number of indicators than the low-poverty movers (described previously), this finding might be expected and is in line with previous research that demonstrates a positive correlation between neighborhood disorder (e.g., crime, vandalism, graffiti, and noise) and reports of mistrust among residents (Ross et al., 2001). Additionally, as discussed above, the low-poverty movers' interactions with neighbors over children's behavior were more collegial and, perhaps, this is indicative of community trust—a key element in collective efficacy. Motunrola, a low-poverty mover in Chicago, waxed eloquently about how her community pulls together in times of need and alludes to this type of trust:

This neighborhood where if someone get sick, oh [*sighing*], everybody come running... And I know we talk about each other and get mad at each other, but when push comes to shove, something happens to someone on this block, we all come together. And that's, see it's like a family.

### Conclusion

We began this investigation interested in comparing the social ties and capital of two sets of poor families who had lived in public housing in Baltimore and Chicago. One set moved with a voucher restricted to a low-poverty neighborhood and the other was subject to regular federal and local housing policies, which involved a substantial amount of relocation in Baltimore and Chicago. We find little evidence that the low-poverty movers (or those relocated through other housing initiatives) in our study were forming close ties with people in their current or placement neighborhoods, or that they were using social ties to leverage better job opportunities. Moreover, the findings suggest that the low-poverty movers were less likely than the regular movers to exchange most types of social support with their ties. In particular, we found that women in the regular mover group were more likely than the low-poverty movers to have given and received most types of material and some types of non-material aid (e.g., cash, clothing, transportation, housing, and babysitting). The regular movers and low-poverty movers did not differ in their

receipt of emotional social support, however, nor was either group socially isolated.

Some might argue that by not exchanging as much material aid with their networks as the regular mover group, the low-poverty movers may be better able to reserve their resources in such a way that fosters upward mobility. The low-poverty movers themselves often expressed how moving allowed them to escape the constant exchange of support that characterized many of the projects and communities in which they had once lived. They also were more likely to reside in areas we rated as high in child supervision, seemed to experience less conflictual relations with their neighbors (especially over children's behavior), and exhibited more trust in others than the regular movers—all of which indicate stronger collective efficacy at the neighborhood level. While it may appear to be a contradiction that the low-poverty movers have lower exchange levels relative to regular movers yet report higher levels of informal supervision and community trust, it is not, as these are different types of indicators. One's exchange patterns may be among people who may or may not be neighbors, and it is possible for communities to hold norms that do not include expectations of regular (and perhaps draining) exchange, but do entail looking out for one another and trust.

By and large, we have taken the stance that these different types of moves (low-poverty versus regular public housing policies) affected the respondents' ties and access to social capital. Essentially, we have two groups of families with similar basic demographic characteristics, yet differing levels of individual social support and, to a lesser degree, neighborhood-level social capital, specifically collective efficacy. We make the claim that moving to a low-poverty area and living there for at least one year may have impacted these social resources. Some research (e.g., Carol Stack's *All Our Kin*), however, indicates that being deeply immersed in resource-poor social exchange networks might actually discourage residential mobility. Thus, those who are already disengaged from long-standing social ties and support networks may be those more willing to move. While we cannot definitively dismiss this alternative explanation for some of our findings, we do know from other MTO research that no significant differences exist between those in the experimental group who used their voucher and

those who did not in terms of having friends or family in the neighborhood at random assignment, though there were other differences, as described previously (Clampet-Lundquist & Massey, 2008). Additional research that can elucidate comprehensively how social ties and support interact with one's willingness to move is certainly needed, as are studies that can address the issues of causality that these analyses cannot.

Rarely did either the regular or low-poverty movers have a close tie that they made from their current neighborhoods and many (particularly the regular movers) distrusted those living around them (and others generally). Perhaps housing mobility program counselors might help foster connections among movers and other residents, so that those relocating might leverage better opportunities. Recent research from a second Gautreaux mobility program suggests that landlords might also help their tenants "integrate socially into the neighborhood" and that a "friendly neighbor or a helpful landlord served as a point of entry into the neighborhood network" (Boyd, Edin, Duncan, & Clampet-Lundquist, 2010, pp. 132, 136). In addition, our findings on how the respondents made their close ties suggest that neighborhood activities, programs, and routines that bring individuals together repeatedly over time can provide an avenue for individuals to forge ties to others. Thus, as recent work by Mario Small (Small, Jacobs, & Massengill, 2008; Small, 2006) suggests, community organizations, such as childcare centers, may offer a way to enhance the social networks and resources of relocated families. While certainly more research is needed on these potential mechanisms for social tie formation, post-relocation counseling that includes information on local activities, institutions, and groups (e.g., churches, recreation centers, block associations, childcare centers), as well as incentives to participate, seems prudent.

As the next wave of studies on relocated families commence, we hope that researchers pay particular attention not only to what changes families experience over time, but also to how they understand these changes and what they see as important to their lives and those of their families. As our findings indicate, what may on the surface appear as a negative outcome (loss of social support) may not be perceived as such by those involved. By approaching research in this way, perhaps, we can be in a better position to advocate for housing

policies that meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable families and improve their well-being.

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## Book Reviews

William W. Eaton, Ed., *Public Mental Health* (2012). Oxford, Oxford University Press. \$89.99 (hardcover).

Mental and behavioral health disorders account for only a modest proportion of national health expenditures, but they constitute an enormous public health problem, contributing to much suffering, community burden, disability, and increased mortality. Attention over the years has focused on an individual approach. A broader public health approach is needed with thoughtful attention to social, environmental and biomedical determinants. This volume represents the first comprehensive effort to present such a perspective.

The book, edited by William Eaton, an eminent researcher and Professor and Chair of the Department of Mental Health of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and his colleagues, includes eighteen chapters covering these important disorders, methods, descriptive epidemiology, risk mechanisms, the relevant service systems and prevention and future directions. This collection is unusual in its inclusion of the efforts of some 48 researchers from this unique and outstanding research-oriented department, and thus is more integrated than one typically finds. The authors' discussions, spanning issues from genetics and the brain to world mental health systems, is evidence-based and sophisticated, inclusive of research well beyond the United States, and sensitive to uncertainties and gaps in our knowledge. The treatment of issues is predominantly population-based with serious efforts to provide reviews of the best epidemiological studies and analyses in the world literature. This volume is an enormous effort and any reader will come away learning a great deal. It undoubtedly will be an important inspiration and reference source for years to come.

In this short review, I can only briefly communicate the content of the many excellent chapters by choosing some

examples to convey the scope of this volume. The book begins with a chapter by Eaton and colleagues' examining the prevalence of some 17 disorders, estimated on the basis of numerous studies, and illustrating the large cumulative burdens, especially those resulting from autism, major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, dementia, and personality disorder. Paul McHugh, a brilliant psychiatrist, and for many years chair of Johns Hopkins psychiatry department, presents an astute critique of the limitations of DSM, its checklist atheoretical approach and the need for an alternative conceptualization structured around etiological pathways. Two excellent chapters introduce students to epidemiological and quantitative methods particularly relevant to a public health orientation. Similarly, a chapter by Zandi and colleagues provides an excellent primer for social work students introducing them to the importance of genetics, a topic typically neglected among non-medical practitioners. But the social receives its due attention with thoughtful chapters on the importance of social forces including SES, race and ethnicity, marital status and urban living, stress and the life course, and adaptation.

For the social work practitioner, the section on the services system is especially valuable. I particularly liked the chapter by Mojtabai and colleagues on pathways to care and assessing need. Ron Manderscheid and colleagues do their usual excellent job in bringing together important data on services and costs. In the final chapter, Leaf and colleagues do a nice job of reviewing the important challenges ahead, addressing such important issues as enhancing population resilience, advancing the current focus on recovery, better increasing coordination and integration of services, and implementing the Affordable Care Act that offers many opportunities to greatly improve mental health services.

From the perspective of social work students, the book's strengths also pose some limitations. In its broad coverage and extraordinary detail, it offers more an encyclopedic coverage to dip into for illumination on specific topics than an integrated story line to inform practice and policy. Thus it should be in every serious social work library but may not be the most successful text for all but the most advanced students. The authors deserve our appreciation for a masterful volume that

will do much to advance understanding of mental health as an essential public health challenge.

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Susan Chandler & Jill B. Jones, *Casino Women: Courage in Unexpected Places* (2011). New York: Cornell University Press. \$29.95 (hardcover).

Chandler and Jones' *Casino Women: Courage in Unexpected Places* describes a chapter in labor history that has yet to be fully explored: how women in the lowest rungs of highly profitable service organizations, many of them immigrants, have overcome the odds, fought for their rights in the workplace, and often won. Chandler and Jones signal early on that their book is "hopeful," rather than bemoaning the sad state of union density (roughly 7% in the private sector according to 2011 Bureau of Labor Statistics figures) or the exploitation and injustices experienced by immigrants in the Western states in the lower rungs of the labor market. They focus on how organizing has transformed the lives of a largely female workforce both on and off the job. Organizing in "company towns" has shaped U.S. labor history and the consciousness of union members, their families and communities. Like mill workers in Lawrence and Lowell Massachusetts, meat-packers in Wisconsin and Illinois, steel workers in Pittsburgh, auto workers in Detroit, and clerical workers at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, casino workers in Nevada gain power in numbers through their pivotal role—as exploited workers, essential fuel for the engine of the local economy, and members of immigrant and/or minority populations trying to gain a foothold in the U.S.

*Casino Women* is the product of ten years of talking to women mainly in Nevada about their lives and experiences as casino workers in highly unionized Las Vegas and barely unionized Reno. Workers from other casinos in nearby Indian reservations and Lake Tahoe also contributed. The authors' methods included: interviews with workers and union activists (many with the Culinary Workers Union); focus groups with former

casino workers, social service and health professionals, and other community representatives; key informant interviews; and site visits to workplaces, union halls, and a wide variety of community spaces. The results of this thorough, longitudinal approach exceed "data triangulation" in qualitative research studies; Chandler and Jones create a deep context for understanding the women's lives they explore and the casino industry that dominates the state and local communities.

The story of *Casino Women* unfolds over 5 parts; the first describes the "back of the house, front of the house" divide through the voices of the largely immigrant women of the housekeeping, kitchen, and laundry departments in the "back of the house," and the young, mainly white, cocktail waitresses in the "front of the house." Part II tells the story of union women, including the compelling story of grassroots union organizing among African Americans propelled by the civil rights movement, and the shift when the "back of the house" jobs came to be dominated by new immigrants from Latin America. Part III describes the struggles of nonunion women to fight for rights in the workplace, and the personal transformations that blossomed, even when struggles failed to bear fruit. Part IV brings us to the casino floor through the story of dealers at the "dead center of the casino industry, where money is transferred from players' hands to the coffers of the gaming corporations;" despite their position at the "top of the non-managerial pyramid," dealers work under stressful surveillance and a cloud of tobacco smoke. Finally, Part V explores the position of women in management; ironically, a step up the career ladder often comes with a high price tag, including poor job security, reduced time for other life pursuits, and—most important for the story that Chandler and Jones are developing—loss of space for resistance and solidarity, as female managers must become compliant partners in the lean and mean corporate world.

Through stories such as the 6 year strike at Frontier Hotel and Casino, where immigrant workers drew on their experiences of hardship to stay the course and ultimately win, the history of organizing among African American women like Sarah Hughes, who began her career as a night maid at the Desert Inn casino and went on to become a central figure in

the labor and civil rights movements that built the Las Vegas Culinary Workers Union, and the story of Edna Harman, a pit boss and recovering alcoholic who discovers the Maryknoll sisters and a commitment to social justice in central America and then returns to help central American casino workers, Chandler and Jones build on 3 key themes: the personal transformations experienced by women who take on the power of the gaming industry, the enormous contributions of the union in improving the lives of casino workers (especially compared to non-union counter parts), and the "consequences of silence"—the price paid by those who remain compliant. Throughout the writing, the narrative replaces the glitzy image of Nevada casinos with the reality of those who work and live in its communities.

Health and safety have always been key union organizing issues, but service sector work has generally been seen as less hazardous than industrial work. *Casino Women* challenges these perspectives and provides concrete examples of health and safety hazards to workers: housekeepers' back and knee injuries, cocktail waitresses' foot injuries and sexual harassment experiences, and dealers' exposure to second-hand smoke (which has been outlawed in most other public spaces). These serious health and safety hazards "embody" the exploitation of casino workers. By including these experiences, the authors make an important contribution to the study of health and safety for service workers.

Some readers might take issue with the hopeful perspective that the book takes. Casino workers describe the "disgusting" environment of the casinos and the devastating effects on the often "desperate" clientele that frequent them. Chandler and Jones focus on the empowerment of those who find their true work in the union and sense of community from their co-workers. While the role of casino worker activists extends to concrete improvements to the community (better standard of living, union sponsored education programs, access to health care), it is disturbing that casino workers toil in the service of an essentially destructive industry.

Chandler and Jones are both social work professors at the University of Reno Nevada (Jones emeritus), who bring a "person in environment" perspective to their analysis. In

particular, the use of social workers as key informants is novel and enlightening, and recognizes the unique perspective that social workers can bring to analyzing how public issues result in private troubles. Historians, public health researchers, and sociologists should take note of this under-utilized source of information and perspective. This book is well-written and straight forward with a natural use of quotes. The time spent on writing and data gathering shines through, and the voices of the participants ring clear and true. It is refreshing to encounter a book that takes on the themes of globalization and neoliberalism without resorting to jargon.

This book should be read by those interested in labor and women studies, community organizing, and occupational health and safety in the service sector. It would also make a great addition to the social work curriculum as a model of how the social work perspective can be embodied by a qualitative research methodology and as a text which shows how the adage "the personal is political" still resonates.

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Carol Lynn McKibben, *Racial Beachhead: Diversity and Democracy in a Military Town* (2012). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. \$24.95 (paperback).

A number of texts have examined and deconstructed the history of twentieth century race relations in America, from broad sweeping views of the politics of racial relations, like Gerstle's 2001 *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*, to more regional or focused accounts of racial politics and community change (Bayor's 2000 *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth Century Atlanta* and Bernstein's 2011 *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-century Los Angeles*). One largely unexamined piece of this history is the role of military towns in the transformation of race relations in American society. Here historian Carol McKibben makes her contribution to the literature, using a variety of sources and documents to lay out the history of race relations, politics, and progress in the town of Seaside, California, the former location of the Fort Ord military base. In this work, she seeks to tell the story of how a small military community in Northern California was

able to establish a peaceful, racially integrated society when so many others have failed in these attempts. In a turn from other accounts of federal civil rights policies, McKibben illustrates how one arm of the government—the military—promoted racial integration in this small coastal community.

The author begins by describing the founding of the town of Seaside in 1917, a community nestled close to the popular tourist destinations of Monterey and Carmel in Southern California. In presenting this history, Seaside is situated in a larger economic and demographic context of the California coast. The next chapter focuses on the demographic transformation of Seaside during the period of the 1930s and 1940s. The author traces how the influx of military personnel drove the residents to incorporate as a city. During this period, the residents experienced a clash between federal housing policies that enforced segregation and the needs of the military to house its high ranking black officers on par with others. Other ethnic and cultural groups also settled in the area during this time, including many groups of Asian Americans, as well as migrants from Mexico. With initial periods of some disarray, all of these groups managed to settle into a largely integrated society.

Chapters three and four trace the major post-war developments in Seaside in regard to race relations. She describes how local Seaside leaders were able to take advantage of government efforts to desegregate housing to redevelop major parts of the city. At that time, the politics of the city continued to actualize racial integration in economic, political, and social spheres. For example, city records show that the city council was racially diverse and, surprisingly, its citizens did not vote for local officers along racial lines. McKibben argues in chapter four that the common bond of the military shaped the identity of the community more so than color or ethnic lines.

Lastly, Chapters five and six delve into the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, which ushered economic crisis, crack cocaine, and rampant crime into the major California cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland, but none of which had a dramatic impact on Seaside. Yet by the end of the 1990s, Fort Ord had shut down and the population demographics changed dramatically. As McKibben's central argument is that the military culture facilitated racial integration with a unified

identity, she likewise documents the struggle with race and culture that ensued after Fort Ord's closure.

The author's carefully crafted history of Seaside offers a glimpse into an untold story of racial integration and harmony on nearly all levels of this unique community. The strength of the work is in the careful historical analysis and use of a variety of sources to bring to life this hidden coastal town that represented great racial progress in practice. On the other hand, the idealism invoked by this account of Seaside leaves the reader to wonder at times if this sense of racial integration was experienced by all groups and parties involved. With such diversity as Southern African Americans, West Coast Whites, and Mexican migrants, it would make sense that there would be several layers of cultural and racial misunderstandings or missteps. Nevertheless, by placing the developments of this community within a larger social and political context, the author most certainly contributes to a greater understanding of race relations in the twentieth century and the role of the military in facilitating racial integration.

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Robert Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (2012). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. \$27.50 (hardcover).

Chicago, according to Robert Sampson, is "arguably the quintessential American city" that "captures the full range and intensity of American passions" (p. 76). In *Great American City*, Sampson, currently a member of Harvard's sociology department and formerly at the University of Chicago, shows how Chicago embodies important components of political, social, economic and cultural histories and continues to serve as a great laboratory for urban research. His 'interrogation' of Chicago's neighborhoods and communities advances our knowledge of how social space and place are intertwined with physical space. Early on, he argues that "differentiation by neighborhood is not only everywhere to be seen, but that it has durable properties—with cultural and social mechanisms

of reproduction—and with effects that span a wide variety of social phenomena” (p. 6). In arguing for a holistic approach to urban research he abandons a reductionist, individually-focused perspective, promoting a structural and cultural analysis instead. He admits to being a structural determinist (p. 63) but argues that individuals matter, too. By discussing how structural forces, including urban planning and politics, affect and shape Chicago’s neighborhoods, Sampson advances the field of urban sociology.

Sampson’s findings are based on research spanning eight years (1994-2002). His Chicago Project grew from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN). The methodology included thousands of extensive home interviews, a Community Survey, ethnographic observations (Systematic Social Observations) in sample neighborhoods clustered from 77 Chicago community areas, a Key Informant Study, and an analysis of a Longitudinal Cohort Study.

Chapters 1-4 of the book provide a detailed history of how the study grew out of an in-depth study on crime in Chicago, the challenges (financial, size), and some of his personal biases towards the subject. In Chapter 4, Sampson skillfully uses data to argue that places are meaningful and are imbued with social, political, economic and human histories that are durable.

Chapters 5-6 focus on various phenomena associated with poverty, such as inequality and crime, while making the case that “disadvantage is not encompassed in a single characteristic but rather is a synergistic composite of social factors” (p. 100). In chapters 7-8, the author argues that collective efficacy, described as “social cohesion combined with shared expectations of social control” (p. 27) can help us understand and predict neighborhood cohesiveness and civic engagement, as well as crime and violence.

Chapters 10-14 provide solid analyses of structures, locations, boundaries, and the redistribution of poverty as poor residents moved and various public housing projects were demolished, and discuss why some places prosper over others. The final chapters discuss changes in Chicago’s neighborhoods, including how neighborhood effects have remained durable.

Sampson supports previous urban studies, such as those

of Wilson, Massey and Denton, and Pattillo. He highlights the consequences of racial residential segregation on neighborhood change and their impact on residents and shows that social isolation, regardless of the source, reproduces conflict and stratification in Chicago. Social differences are "pervasive, strong, cross-cutting, and paradoxically stable even as they are changing in a manifest form" (p. 6). Place and place boundaries, he shows, are meaningful and purposeful.

Given the book's strengths, some of Sampson's research, language and discussion are problematic. Sampson is a criminologist, and his professional interests shape many of his analyses and descriptions. Throughout the book, he judges Chicago's neighborhoods through a criminologist's lens, and suggests that life in these places is mainly about survival and not living. Sampson's repeated mentions of crime and violence situates Chicago neighborhoods along a crime-violence continuum. Although he proclaims to support a holistic approach and focuses on structure while also acknowledging various resource deficits in many of the neighborhoods, Sampson portrays Chicago neighborhoods as being dominated by crime and dysfunction. Although the author acknowledges institutional violence and its impact on the children and neighborhood well-being, his book falters as he repeatedly frames urban blackness alongside "disorganization," "disadvantage," "violence" and "crime." Almost as an aside, Sampson suggests that this is not his goal or intention. It would have proved useful had he shared the characteristics of the neighborhoods he studied beyond this deficit-focused framework. Additionally, Sampson builds much of his argument around the theory of collective efficacy, but factors such as resources, nutrition, the physical environments of schools, and racial social histories, were too little discussed. These factors have significant imprints on space and place. We must be mindful of Mills' admonishment that we not lose sight of, but fully engage, biography, history, and social structures in understanding our social world.

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Melvin Delgado, *Prisoner Reentry at Work: Adding Business to the Mix* (2012). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. \$58 (hardcover).

That the U.S. prison population has skyrocketed in the last 20 years has begun to be widely discussed among sociologists, legal scholars, practitioners, and even the public at large. But the hard circumstances that former prisoner face when they leave prison has been much less studied. This is Melvin Delgado's concern, and he has written a relatively short book (188 pages plus references) to highlight both the difficulties that this population faces and two examples of programs that are successful in providing ex-prisoners with community and work while preventing recidivism. Delgado, a professor of social work at Boston University, shows his compassion for this denigrated population and shows that, given appropriate supports, its members have or can develop skills to become productive members of society.

The first three chapters of the book, *Returning Ex-Offenders to Society*, *Community Reentry*, and *Employment Issues*, review the literature to document what is known about the challenges facing prisoners who return to the "free world" (a term not used in the book but one commonly found in criminology literature). Citing findings that, in 2006, about 713,000 prisoners were discharged from state and federal prisons and that, at least in some states and provoked by the states' budget crises, releases are being stepped up, Delgado documents the many ways in which prisoners are unprepared to undertake crime-free lives: rehabilitation, educational and vocational training programs in prisons have all but disappeared; drug addictions, very common among prisoners, and mental illnesses go untreated; and family ties have frequently attenuated. Then there are structural barriers to successful reentry: federal laws make it unlawful for ex-felons to live in public housing, even if their families reside there; private landlords discriminate against them, too; there are restrictions against receiving food stamps; legal barriers prevent former prisoners from doing some kinds of work; ex-prisoners cannot vote in many states; and employers pervasively refuse to hire anyone with a prison record (easily researched online). And, because

the great majority of prisoners are either African-American or Hispanic, racism is an additional burden to reintegration into society. The barriers to employment are described as the principle reason that ex-prisoners fail. The predictable consequence is, too commonly, a return to crime and the prison.

Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to detailed and laudatory descriptions of two innovative and forward-looking programs, Homeboy/Homegirl Industries and the Delancy Street Foundation, respectively. Both of these organizations were started in California by dynamic innovators whose approaches have established models of housing, skill development, self-help, entrepreneurship, self-governance, and mutuality in populations ignored by society in general and often given to mistrust among themselves. Delgado appreciates the knowledge and skills that ex-prisoners either have or are capable of developing, and his book is successful in giving them the "voice" that he describes as being too generally ignored.

Chapter 6, only 5 pages long, entitled "Implications for Practice," calls on professionals to adopt flexible and comprehensive approaches to working with former prisoners; he again touts the success of the aforementioned social enterprises and suggests that they form the basis of a new, proactive reentry approach.

The final chapter, 7, calls upon criminologists and the helping professions to adopt a paradigm shift from viewing ex-inmates as suffering from deficits to possessing assets that only need to be tapped. The "strengths perspective" popular in social work literature is thus to be applied to this population, one that has been largely abandoned by social work. Research in this field, similarly, should be informed by former prisoners themselves, a position maintained by the author that seems both sensible and humane.

*Prisoner Reentry at Work* is most useful for students and practitioners interested in knowing more about and working with or developing programs for prison-leavers. It is not without its flaws, however. The writing is often repetitious and is frequently dominated by long quotes from other sources, particularly from what seem to be promotional materials of Homeboy/Homegirl Industries and The Delancy Street Foundation. Of greater concern, the author provides almost no

material about the role of public policy, except those (housing restrictions, denial of public benefits, e.g.) that impede ex-prisoners' ability to survive outside of prison. A section entitled "A Role for Government" consists of only two paragraphs that concludes that the private sector cannot shoulder the burden of reentry on its own. The two voluntary programs highlighted in the book are inspiring, but no empirical outcome data are presented and, in any case, successful replications are unlikely. More attention to what pro-active public policy for this significant population should look like would have strengthened the book; this is a policy arena crying out for attention.

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