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The current farm crisis draws attention to the sources and consequences of the stress process among farm operators. Using panel data from statewide surveys of North Carolina farm operators collected during a period of economic and ecological crisis, the relationships among perceived stress, social support, and survival in agriculture are investigated. Analyses reveal that while the level of perceived stress has no relationship with survival, social support has a significant impact upon both social psychological (plans to remain in farming) and behavioral (continuing as a farm operator) dimensions of survival in agriculture. Perceived social support increased plans to remain in agriculture and increased the probability of an operator continuing farming. The results point to the importance of social support and have implications for policy intervention and programs.

The term "farm crisis" is used to describe the negative experiences of farm families in the 1980s (Keating, 1987; Thompson & McCubbin, 1987) which have often been described as the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Harl, 1986). Because the farm crisis places extra demands on farm families, concern with farmers' high levels of stress has become a national issue.

* Paper number 12465 of the Journal Series of the North Carolina Agricultural Research Service, Raleigh, N.C. 27695-7601. Revised version of paper presented at the annual meetings of the Southern Sociological Society, April, 1989, Norfolk, Virginia. Data collected for this research are part of the North Carolina Farm and Rural Life Study (1987), a project of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina. The North Carolina Farm and Rural Life Study is supported by the North Carolina Agricultural Research Service and the North Carolina Agricultural Foundation. The opinions expressed are those of the authors who would like to thank Michael Schwalbe for comments on previous drafts.
Evidence exists that some farm families display a diverse set of problems and reactions to stress including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, interpersonal violence, marital disruption, and attempted suicide (Heffernan & Heffernan, 1986; Hargrove, 1986; Bultena, Lasley, & Geller, 1986; Davis-Brown & Salamon, 1987; Weigel & Weigel, 1987). There is also concern that the combination of high levels of stress and economic hardship has caused large numbers of farm operators to exit farming. Farm operators are an occupational group vulnerable to uncontrol- lable and unpredictable demands or stressors. These include wide seasonal variations in work requirements, substantial financial investment and risk, changes in domestic government policies, shifts in international markets, and dependence upon the forces of nature (e.g., weather, plant and animal diseases) (Rosenblatt & Anderson, 1981; Olson & Schellenberg, 1986). Economic stress and the threat of economic disaster are present in the lives of most farmers in ways people in other occupations rarely experience (Rosenblatt & Keller, 1983). These stressors, specific to farming, have been exacerbated by economic hardship in the agricultural sector (Bultena et al., 1986).

The negative impact of economic difficulties and high levels of stress upon the individual has been documented in previous research (Horwitz, 1984; Ross & Huber, 1985). In addition, work of stress theorists suggest that personal and social resources are especially important in the stress process (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Pearl, Lieberman, Menaghen & Mullen, 1981). Factors such as age, education, and social support create differential reactions to similar conditions (Hinkle, 1974). These differences are the result of the various ways people respond to life problems, and the resources, actions and perceptions they mobilize as they seek to avoid or minimize stress (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). There are different types of resources people can draw on to help in times of trouble (i.e., psychological resources such as self-esteem and mastery), but of specific interest in this study is the role of social support in reducing the negative effects of stress (Gottlieb, 1981; Lin, Dean, & Ensle, 1986; Thoits, 1982).

Farm families are often stereotyped as having well-devel- oped networks of social and community support. Social support is important because it impacts an individual's appraisal of de-
mmands or stressors. However, recent research has shown that the depth of the current farm crisis has severely strained existing social and community support networks (Heffernan & Heffernan, 1986; Wright & Rosenblatt, 1987; Keating, 1987; Jurich & Russell, 1987; Heyman & Salamon, 1988). In response, many public and private organizations have provided social support services (e.g., hot lines, peer groups counseling) to decrease stress levels and to help operators remain in farming.

It is assumed that high levels of perceived stress will have a negative impact upon a farm operator's continuation in farming. No study, to our knowledge, has examined the actual survival of farmers as it relates to levels of perceived stress and social support and to demographic, socioeconomic, and farm structure characteristics. Perhaps because of the lack of panel data, other studies of the consequences of the farm crisis have concentrated upon financial viability, not the actual survival of the farm operation (Murdock, Albrecht, Hamm, Leistritz, & Leholm, 1986). The objective of the present study is to investigate the relationships between perceived stress, social support, farm operator characteristics, and farm operator survival using panel data from surveys of North Carolina farm operators.

Farm Operators: Stress and Survival

Stress, as it is conceptualized in this paper, emphasizes the importance of an individual's perception and evaluation of demands in his/her environment (Cohen, Sherrod, & Clark, 1986). One of the more influential models suggests that the experience of stress is related to a balance between primary and secondary appraisals (see Lazarus, 1966 and Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Primary appraisal is conceptualized as the evaluation of the stressor and its implications, while secondary appraisal involves an appraisal of the individual's coping abilities and resources. When resources are perceived as plentiful, perceived stress may be minimal. If however, resources are perceived as inadequate and an individual is uncertain of capably coping with a situation that has been appraised as threatening or demanding, the level of perceived stress may be great (Lazarus, 1966). This view of stress implies that people actively interact with their environ-
ments, appraising potentially threatening or challenging events in the light of available coping resources (Kessler, 1979).

Research devoted to agricultural concerns have highlighted the importance of a number of different demands with respect to the stress process. One category of demands identified in the farm literature relates to the structure and organization of the farm operation and includes such variables as farm size, off-farm employment, and level of financial concern (Molnar, 1985; Keating, 1987; Walker & Walker, 1987; Keating, Doherty, & Munro, 1986).

Previous research from the nonagricultural sphere has shown that certain socioeconomic and demographic characteristics can be considered as stressors or demands. Individuals undergoing economic difficulties such as low income are at greater risk of experiencing stress (Ross & Huber, 1985; Catalano & Dooley, 1983). It is also well documented that being a women, or being nonwhite is demanding or stressful (Kessler & McLeod, 1984). One of the most consistent findings in the epidemiological literature is that the married manifest better mental health than the nonmarried (Kessler, 1979; Mirowsky & Ross, 1986; Thoits, 1987; Bachrach, 1975). Household size has been viewed as a potential (economic) stressor, because as household size increases, money is spread over a larger number of individuals in the home (Ross & Huber, 1985).

The general social stress and farm literatures highlight the importance of age as a contributing factor in the stress process (Ross & Huber 1985; Horwitz, 1984; Murdock et al., 1986; Campbell, Heffernan, & Gilles, 1984; Heffernan & Heffernan, 1986). The young are often economically disadvantaged, for not only are their earnings and savings lower, but their economic demands are greater.

With regards to resources, classical anomie theory argues that social integration protects the person against uncertainty and demanding situations (Durkheim, 1951). Studies show that social networks are an important personal resource as evidenced by a positive relationship between the extent of social support and psychological well-being (Berkman & Syme, 1979; Henderson, Byrne, Duncan-Jones, Scott, & Adcock, 1980; Unger & Powell, 1980; Gottlieb, 1981; Husaini, Neff, Newbrough, & Moore,
Other studies present evidence that perceived support is central in reducing negative outcomes of stress (i.e., depression, anxiety, low self-esteem) (Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983; Wethington & Kessler, 1986).

Examining the sociological needs of farmers facing severe economic problems, Heffernan and Heffernan (1986) found that the vast majority of their respondents felt that having a network of persons who listened and offered moral support in times of trouble helped them to cope more effectively with stress. Linn and Husaini (1987) found social support to be an important correlate of depression among farm respondents. Keating (1987) found resources (both personal and social) were stronger predictors of stress in farmers than were financial demands, which in her analysis were not predictive of stress.

In summary, the general social stress literature and studies of farm operators identify demographic, socioeconomic, farm structure, economic hardship, and social support characteristics as important variables in the stress process for farm operators. It is assumed that high levels of stress and low levels of social support have negative impacts upon farm operator survival. However, there has been no attempt to examine this relationship with data from large-scale samples of farm operators. The problem of analyzing the impact of perceived stress, social support and other exogenous variables upon survival in agriculture requires panel data. After detailing data and measurements, we present multivariate models of survival among North Carolina farm operators.

Data and Method

The data used in this study come from the North Carolina Farm Survey gathered in January and February of 1987 and 1988. A random sample of farm operators was selected from a list provided by a state agency. A total of 977 operators and former operators were contacted during the first set of interviews. Interviews were conducted during the first two months of 1987 and concerned the 1986 agricultural year. Of 883 respondents who completed interviews, 725 operated farms during 1986. Comparisons of demographic data on the 725 farm operators with data from the 1982 Census of Agriculture revealed
that sample and population characteristics were very similar. A second set of interviews with the respondents were conducted in early 1988. Approximately 90% of the original sample completed the second wave of telephone interviews. Screening questions determined if the original respondents were still operating a farm or if they had exited agriculture. Of the original sample of 725 active farm operators, 595 survived in farming and 75 exited farming in 1987 (the remaining 55 were not located or refused to be reinterviewed). Thus the data set for this study consists of the 670 farm operators who completed interviews in both surveys. All respondents operated farms during the 1986 agricultural year and 595 also operated farms during the 1987 agricultural year.

The 1986–1987 period was a particularly difficult time for North Carolina farm operators. In addition to the general aspects of the farm crisis, 1986–1987 was a drought period characterized by reductions in farm production and farm income (North Carolina Agricultural Statistics Division, 1987). Further uncertainty was generated by debate over changes in the federal programs supporting the major field crop, flue-cured tobacco.

Measures of Dependent Variables

Two dimensions of farm operator survival were measured in the present study: a social psychological measure of plans to continue in farming, and a behavioral measure of continuing in farming.

During the first wave of interviews, a question was asked about the farm operator’s plans for the future. Responses were coded so that a high score indicates plans to continue in agriculture, while a low score indicates plans to exit or reduce the scale of agricultural operations. A behavioral measure of survival was constructed using data from first and the second sets of interviews. This measure assessed whether or not the farm operator was still operating a farm one year after the original interviews (0=exit from agriculture; 1=survival).
Perceived Stress, Social Support and Survival

Measures of Exogenous Variables

The demographic variables, age, race, gender, marital status, household size, and education were ascertained by direct questions. Four measures of farm structure are included. Total acres, a measure of scale, is the total number of acres farmed (both owned and not owned in 1986). Acres owned can be considered a measure of tenure and of the size of the farm resource base. Number of days of on-farm work and number of days of off-farm work are indicators of the extent to which the farm is a full-time effort for the farm operator. They can also be considered measures of the demands of farming as an occupation and of isolation from nonfarm spheres. Two measures of income are included in the analysis: total family income and the percentage of family income from farming. Perceived economic hardship is measured by a question about concerns for the farm’s financial future (labeled financial concern). We expect these variables to be related to survival, in addition to being important control variables.

A modified eight-item version of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarch, & Mermelstein, 1983) was included in the survey as a global measure of perceived stress. The level of perceived stress can be viewed as an indicator of the extent to which an individual’s environment is appraised as stressful or demanding (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). Items included in the modified version of the PSS are designed to cut across several dimensions found to be central components of social psychological stress. Especially important are items dealing with perceived control over one’s life. This scale is sensitive to chronic stress arising from ongoing life circumstances, expectations concerning future events, and events occurring to friends and family. Survival in agriculture is most likely affected by a more global perception of stress (i.e., from perceptions of how things are going in general) in comparison to a specific event.

During the telephone interviews, respondents were asked a series of yes/no questions to determine whether or not they found their lives unpredictable and uncontrollable. For all items, a response indicating stress was scored as one, and all nonstress responses were scored as zero. Missing data responses were replaced with means. Factor analysis of the eight items revealed
one strong underlying factor (Eigenvalues greater than one) and that four items were the best measures of perceived stress (loadings greater than .35; see Table 1). Three of the four items deal directly with control over one’s life and environment and the fourth taps general perceptions of stress. We believe these items are particularly appropriate for farm operators, given the lack of control and predictability inherent in farming as an occupation. Thus, the “Perceived Stress Index” is a four item summated index with a mean of 1.39, a standard deviation of 1.26, a range of 0 to 4 and a Cronbach’s alpha of .60.5

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Pattern Loadings on Perceived Stress Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the last month, have you</td>
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<tr>
<td>Been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt nervous and stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt that things were going your way*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been angered because of things that were outside of your control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Item Responses Reversed

The final exogenous variable is social support. Perception of support availability is measured by responses to the questions: “Now, considering your financial situation, do you feel that you and your family are receiving adequate emotional or financial support from: (a) friends and neighbors; (b) church; (c) family members; (d) schools; (e) local voluntary organizations; (f) human service organizations?” Yes responses were scored as one and all other responses were scored as zeroes. Missing data were replaced with means. A factor analysis showed one underlying factor (Eigenvalue=2.199) with all six items having moderately high loadings (ranging from 0.54 to 0.64). Therefore,
the six items were summed to produce a single index of social support. The index has a range of 0 to 6, a mean of 4.26, a standard deviation of 1.69, and a Cronbach's Alpha of .76.

The North Carolina farm operators indicated that there was a hierarchy in terms of the perceived adequacy of support received. Results showed that traditional sources of support (e.g., support from family members, church, friends and neighbors) were perceived as more adequate than support from social welfare agencies (i.e., voluntary organizations and human service organizations). The percentage responding yes (i.e., perceiving adequate support) for each of the sources was as follows: family members (89.1%); church (87.6%); friends and neighbors (82.9%); voluntary organizations (63.2%); schools (54.9%); and human service agencies (48.3%).

Findings

What impacts do perceived stress and social support have upon farm operator’s plans for the future and upon survival in agriculture? One would hypothesize that higher levels of perceived stress would decrease plans to remain in agriculture and the probability of actually surviving in agriculture across the two waves of the panel. Conversely, perceived social support should show positive relationships with the social psychological and behavior measures of survival.6

At the bivariate level, there is essentially no relationship between perceived stress and plans to remain or exit agriculture (Table 2). Regressing the plans for the future variable upon perceived stress and upon the other exogenous variables shows that age, percent income from farming, and social support manifest statistically significant coefficients in the regression model (Table 3).

Older farm operators and farm operators with lower percentages of income from farming were more likely to plan to reduce their farming operations or to plan to exit agriculture altogether. Older operators may be planning to exit agriculture via retirement, and those less dependent upon farming for income may be planning to reduce or exit agriculture for other occupations. In addition, social support increased plans to continue in agriculture.
Table 2

Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y1</th>
<th>Y2</th>
<th>X1</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>X3</th>
<th>X4</th>
<th>X5</th>
<th>X6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y 1. Plans</td>
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<td>Y 2. Survival</td>
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<td>0 = Exit</td>
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<td>1 = Survive</td>
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<td>X 1. Age</td>
<td>- .214***</td>
<td>- .089*</td>
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<td>X 2. Race</td>
<td>- .033</td>
<td>.109**</td>
<td>- .098*</td>
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<td>0 = Nonwhite</td>
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<td>X 3. Gender</td>
<td>- .028</td>
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<td>- .062</td>
<td>- .044</td>
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<td>0 = Female</td>
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<td>X 4. Marital Status</td>
<td>- .016</td>
<td>- .004</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.128***</td>
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<td>0 = Not Married</td>
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<td>1 = Married</td>
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<td>X 5. Household Size</td>
<td>.109**</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>- .458***</td>
<td>- .092*</td>
<td>.096*</td>
<td>.223***</td>
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<td>X 6. Education</td>
<td>.138***</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>- .358***</td>
<td>.130***</td>
<td>- .026</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.179***</td>
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<tr>
<td>X 7. Total Acres Farmed</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>- .082*</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.003</td>
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<tr>
<td>X 8. Acres Owned</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>- .002</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>- .062</td>
<td>.026</td>
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<td>.083*</td>
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<td>X 9. Days On-Farm Labor</td>
<td>.080*</td>
<td>.163***</td>
<td>- .170***</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.111**</td>
<td>- .015</td>
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<td>X10. Days Off-Farm Labor</td>
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<td>- .074</td>
<td>- .272***</td>
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<td>.066</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.169***</td>
<td>.240***</td>
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<td>X11. Total Family Income</td>
<td>.093*</td>
<td>.076*</td>
<td>- .297***</td>
<td>.188***</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.122**</td>
<td>.146***</td>
<td>.347***</td>
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<td>X12. Percent Income from Farming</td>
<td>.137***</td>
<td>.111**</td>
<td>- .138***</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.082*</td>
<td>- .014</td>
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<td>X14. Social Support</td>
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<td>.091*</td>
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<td>.007</td>
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<td>.084*</td>
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<td>X15. Perceived Stress</td>
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<td>.007</td>
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<td>SD</td>
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<td>.30</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.26</td>
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*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>-.104**</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.099*</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>-.030</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.170***</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.190***</td>
<td>-.136***</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191.54</td>
<td>79.59</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>40.88</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>1.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>590.21</td>
<td>190.61</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>37.42</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.27</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3  

Multiple Regression of Plans for Future on Exogenous Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>-.163</td>
<td>-3.303</td>
<td>.0010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>-.167</td>
<td>-.062</td>
<td>-1.569</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.165</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>-1.567</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>-1.569</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Size</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>1.743</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Acres Farmed</td>
<td>.00003</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.481</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Owned</td>
<td>-.00001</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days On-Farm Labor</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days Off-Farm Labor</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.828</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Family Income</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from Farming</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>2.513</td>
<td>.0122</td>
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<td>Financial Concern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>2.173</td>
<td>.0301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>-1.511</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R2 = 0.838  
F Ration = 3.988  
Prob > F = .0001

The bivariate relationship between perceived stress and survival in agriculture is also nonsignificant (Table 2). Because survival is a dichotomous variable and because the split between the two categories is not even (11% exited), ordinary least-squares regression can result in errors in inference (Aldrich & Nelson, 1984). Logistic regression was utilized to calculate maximum-likelihood estimates for the regression of survival on perceived stress, social support, and the other exogenous variables. The logistic regression coefficients express the incremental effect of the exogenous variables on the logarithm of the probability of surviving in agriculture.
Table 4 presents the results of the logistic regression. The model with perceived stress and the other exogenous variables is statistically significant as compared to the intercept only model. Race, number of days of on-farm labor, and social support show statistically significant net effects on the log-odds of survival in agriculture. Being white and working more days on the farm increases the log-odds of survival. The direction of the effect between perceived stress and survival is negative, but the relationship is not statistically significant at the multivariate level. However, social support has a significant positive impact on the log-odds of survival.

Table 4

Logistic Regression of Survival in Farming on Exogenous Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Variables</th>
<th>Logit Coefficient</th>
<th>CHI-SQ</th>
<th>PROB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Intercept</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>1.012</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.270</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>-0.343</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Size</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Acres Farmed</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Owned</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days On-Farm Labor</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days Off-Farm Labor</td>
<td>-0.108</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Family Income</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Income from Farming</td>
<td>0.0004</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Concern</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 2 Log Likelihood: 430.59

Model Chi-Square Compared to Model with Intercept Only: 35.15/15 D.F. PROB = .0006
We expected perceived stress to have negative impacts upon survival in agriculture as operationalized by both social psychological (plans for the future) and behavioral (continuing as a farm operator) measures. At the bivariate and multivariate levels, perceived stress showed no relationship with either survival measure. In other words, when demands and resources are controlled, perceived stress does not impact survival. Further, the various indicators of economic hardship or uncertainty also showed no relationship with the measures of survival. On-farm labor increased the probability of an operator continuing to operate a farm. The results imply that levels of perceived stress and farm operator survival may be relatively separate phenomenon: life on the farm may be appraised as stressful, but this does not appear to be sufficient cause to plan to exit from, or to actually leave farming. This underscores the importance of farming as a valued "way of life," despite the demands and uncertainty inherent in farming. However, the time span of the North Carolina panel may be too short to capture the causal chain between stress and survival. The regression analyses did show that social support had significant positive impacts upon plans to continue farming and the actual behavior of staying in agriculture. Given that social support was measured in the first wave of panel interviews, there is little doubt that it precedes farm operator survival.

Discussion

Data from statewide surveys of North Carolina farm operators were used to examine the relationship between levels of perceived social stress and two dimensions of survival in agriculture, controlling for the influence of demographic, farm structure, socioeconomic, and social support characteristics. Multivariate analyses revealed that perceived stress did not have significant impact upon either social-psychological plans to stay in agriculture or the behavioral dimension of survival in agriculture. However, perceived social support had a statistically significant impact upon both survival measures: social support increased plans to continue in agriculture and increased the probability that a farm operator survived in farming.
The results confirm a major assumption underlying social policy and social work practice: that increasing the perceptions of support availability will have positive results for farm operators experiencing stress. The structure of social welfare in rural communities, particularly the small number of agencies and professionals (Ginsberg, 1976), means that the traditional rural social work practice of mobilizing and strengthening natural networks within the community (e.g., family members, friends, churches) may be the most advantageous method for assisting farm operators and their families (Buxton, 1976). Organizations such as the Cooperative Extension have mobilized natural networks through support groups, hotlines, and peer counseling (Keating, 1987).

The number of black-operated farms in the United States has declined at rates approximately double those for whites (USCCR, 1982). The North Carolina farm survey data show that minority racial status decreased the probability of surviving in agriculture, even when all other variables were controlled. The panel data revealed that 11% of white respondents, whereas 23% of nonwhite respondents (blacks and native Americans), exited agriculture. Policies specifically addressed to the problems and conditions of minority farm operators are necessary if they are to remain part of the agricultural structure.

Given continuing occupational, economic and ecological uncertainties in agricultural production, farm operator stress will continue. Therefore, the need for social welfare program development designed to provide farm operators with social support will continue. Programs which combine technical assistance from nonfarm professionals with peers providing services through existing networks are one possible strategy. In North Carolina, the Duke Endowment has organized a rural church network to provide training and resources to rural ministers. The United Farmer’s Organization, a multiracial group of North and South Carolina family farmers assisted by professionals from the Rural Advancement Fund, operates a hotline, provides advice for farmers facing foreclosure, and lobbies for political change. The North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers funds a land-loss prevention project to provide legal assistance to minority farmers who lack clear legal titles to their
land. In addition to the specific benefits that these efforts provide to farm operators, they increase the perception that social support is available. While social support cannot eliminate the economic, ecological, and occupational stressors particular to farming, it can have positive outcomes for farm operator survival in agriculture.

References


Perceived Stress, Social Support and Survival


Wethington, E., & Kessler, R. (1986). Perceived support, received support, and
adjustment to stressful life events. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 27*, 78–89.


Notes

1. Comparisons of second wave respondents and nonrespondents utilizing first wave data revealed little or no differences in mean education, age, total family income, days of on-farm labor, and days of off-farm labor. Second wave nonrespondents operated smaller scale operations and were more dependent upon farming for total family income than second wave respondents.

2. The specific question was, "Within the next two years, are you more likely to expand your farming operation, reduce your farming operation, keep your farming operation about the same, or leave farming altogether?" Plans to expand were coded as 4, plans to keep the farm the same were coded as 3, plans to reduce were coded as 2 and plans to exit were coded as 1.

3. An appendix detailing the operationalization of exogenous variables is available from the authors.

4. Though it is difficult to distinguish conceptually between perceived stress and psychological distress, it is our contention that the perception of stress itself, as assessed by the Perceived Stress index, is not merely a measure of psychological symptomatology. First, the PSS contains some items that are not typical of psychological disorder scales (i.e., perceived control over one's life). Secondly, situations in life can be appraised as stressful without resulting in various psychological symptoms.

5. A yes/no format for perceived stress was utilized in order to measure whether or not the respondents perceived any stress within the last month. A pretest using a more standard Likert-like set of responses resulted in a large number of no responses and don't know's. Given time limitations for the telephone interviews (approximately ten minutes) and the results of the pretests, it was decided to utilize the yes/no format, even though it may have reduced the variance in responses.

In telephone interviews, a four-item abbreviated version of the PSS was found to have adequate reliability and was a useful measure of perceived stress for situations requiring a short index (Cohen, 1986; Cohen et al., 1983). In a recent article using a large national sample, Cohen and Williamson (1988) compare fourteen, ten, and four item versions of the PSS. Their four item version of the PSS had an alpha of .60 (exactly the same as the four item index in this study). They state that a four item PSS index "demonstrated a moderate loss in reliability, but its factor structure and predictive validity were good...(and)
is appropriate for use in situations requiring a very brief measure of stress perceptions” (Cohen & Williamson, 1988:61).

6. It is possible that the effects of some of the exogenous variables (stresses) upon the survival measures are really nonlinear. Tests for non-linearity between both survival measures and age, percent income from farming, and total family income were nonsignificant.
Among all groups of single-parent families, those created by a birth to an unmarried woman have the least likelihood of receiving child support and the greatest risk of becoming dependent on welfare. Wisconsin data indicate that child support reform—specifically the immediate income assignment—is improving child support payment performance. But the modest increases in payments to nonmarital children will have little effect on their welfare recipiency. The fathers of these children lack the economic resources to aid their families much in the short term. However, cost effectiveness should not be the only criterion used in enforcing child support. It is important to send the message to all parent that they are expected to assume responsibility for the children they bear.

Establishing and enforcing paternal child support obligations has become a major strategy in alleviating the welfare dependency of single mothers and their children. Both policymakers and researchers agree that the lack of financial support from the absent father forces a significant number of single mother families to rely on the public sector for support.

Among all groups of single-parent families, the ones created by a birth to an unmarried woman have the least likelihood of receiving child support, and, not surprisingly, these families

* This research was supported in part by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Ford Foundation, and the Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
are at the greatest risk of being welfare dependent. In 1985, less than 12% of the never-married mothers potentially eligible for child support received a child support payment, compared to approximately 54% of divorced mothers. In that same year, 22% of all single-mother families were headed by never-married women, but they comprised over 45% of the families on AFDC (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1988). These data suggest that current efforts to enforce child support in order to reduce welfare dependency will be successful only if they reach families of never-married mothers. Although previous research has suggested that attempts to establish and enforce child support obligations are less successful for never-married mothers than for ever-married mothers (Robins, 1984), we know very little about the outcomes or potential of recent reforms for the population of never-married mothers.

This paper describes trends in policies toward children born outside of marriage, examines changes across time in one state's paternity adjudication rates for nonmarital children and their families, and assesses the effects of one recent child support enforcement strategy on this state's paternity caseload. This enforcement strategy, referred to as immediate income assignment, requires that the child support obligation be withheld from the income of the obligor immediately upon the issuance of the child support order. Immediate assignment is currently being implemented in several states, and under the Family Support Act of 1988 must be implemented in all states no later than 1994. It is assumed that immediate assignment will increase both the timeliness and size of child support payments and thereby reduce the reliance of single-parent families on the welfare system.

The paper looks first at policies and practices in the United States toward the nonmarital child. Because public policy has condoned, and often legalized, the notion that nonmarital children have less right to financial assistance from their fathers than children born within a marriage, this information is critical for understanding what must be done to obtain child support for this population. Of particular importance is the issue of paternity adjudication. Without a legally identified father, nonmarital children are not eligible for child support. Next we describe
the various data sources used for examining paternity adjudication trends and for analyzing the effects of immediate income assignment on paternity cases. Then we present and discuss our results. Using both published data and court record data collected as part of the evaluation of the Wisconsin Child Support Reform Demonstration, we examine changes in paternity adjudication rates, child support payment levels, and welfare recipiency rates before and after the introduction of immediate income assignment in Wisconsin. In the final section we discuss the policy implications of our findings.

Nonmarital Children and Public Policy

Most contemporary observers believe that policies designed to establish and enforce the child support obligation apply equally to all children. This is not the case. Unlike children born within a marriage, nonmarital children are not eligible for child support until their paternity has been established by law. And, historically, establishing paternity has been a significant obstacle for children born out of wedlock. In common law, an "illegitimate" child was considered to have no father–she/he was viewed as the mother's child only. Although this view has gradually changed, until the United States Supreme Court intervened in a series of cases in 1968, many states denied the nonmarital child rights of paternal support, inheritance, custody, name, and claims under such programs as Worker's Compensation. On the basis of the Equal Protection Clause, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1968 that nonmarital children are entitled to legal equality with marital children in most areas of the law (Krause, 1981).

The determination of paternity establishes the legal basis for claiming a variety of rights for the nonmarital child, but it has been used almost exclusively to obtain financial support from the father. As early as 1922, with the passage of the Uniform Illegitimacy Act, it was established that paternity actions could be brought either by the mother or, if the child was likely to be a public charge, by the authority charged with its support (Melli, 1984). This right turned into a mandate in 1967 when the federal government enacted legislation requiring state welfare agencies to initiate proceedings to establish paternity for AFDC
children who were born out of wedlock. In 1975 the federal government strengthened its role in this area through the passage of Title IV-D of the Social Security Act, which created the Child Support Enforcement program. The states are responsible for running this program, but they are reimbursed by the federal government for about 70% of the cost of establishing paternity, locating nonresident parents, and collecting child support. The 1975 legislation also required that program services be available to families not on welfare as well as those dependent on AFDC. The 1984 amendments to Title IV-D further reinforced federal commitment to child support enforcement by requiring states to extend statutes of limitations on paternity adjudications until the child reached the age of 18, to institute mandatory income assignment when payments were in arrears, to establish guidelines for child support awards, and to implement a variety of other provisions aimed at improving the effectiveness of the system.

Prior to national mandates, however, several states had already enacted legislation to improve the performance of their child support systems. Wisconsin, for example, has, since 1978, required that income assignments be used when support payments are delinquent, and in 1983 the state legislated a uniform standard that could be used in setting award levels. Several states have recently established timelines to expedite paternity determination, and some allow voluntary acknowledgment of paternity, in lieu of a court proceeding, as a legal basis for establishing child support orders. The improved accuracy of blood tests has also prompted a few states to allow blood results to be used as a presumption of parentage (Loyacono, 1988).

These efforts appear to have significantly increased child support recipiency among families of never-married mothers. From 1981 to 1985, paternity adjudications increased by over 40% (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1985), and the percentage of families of never-married mothers who received a child support award increased by almost 30% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983; 1989). Even with these impressive increases, however, less than 30% of nonmarital children have their paternity established (Danziger and Nichols-Casebolt, 1986), and only 18.4% of all never-married mothers potentially
eligible for child support received an award in 1985. This compares to almost 82% of divorced mothers with a child support award in 1985 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989).

One can only speculate on the reasons for the dismal performance of the child support system in serving families of never-married mothers. There is some indication that the child support enforcement system does not view these cases as cost effective. The burden of first having to establish paternity usually makes these cases more costly to process than divorce cases. In addition, fathers in paternity cases are generally assumed to be young, financial unstable, and unwilling to pay child support, and therefore likely to result in lower awards and increased enforcement costs. As a further deterrent to focusing on nonmarital cases, state IV-D programs receive federal incentive payments based on their total child support collections. This incentive plan effectively encourages states to target those cases they believe to have the greatest potential for payments.

It is unclear to what extent recent reforms have influenced attitudes and practices toward fathers who have not been married to the mothers of their children. It is apparent, however, that success in collecting child support depends on bringing these cases into the system via the establishment of paternity, as well as the ability to implement adequate and enforceable child support awards.

Data

The data for determining trends in paternity adjudication rates were obtained from three sources: (a) the number of nonmarital births compiled by the Wisconsin Division of Health; (b) the number of paternity adjudications reported by counties to the Wisconsin Office of Child Support; and (c) the number of never-married families on AFDC from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services.

The data for the analysis of the effects of immediate income assignments were collected as part of an evaluation of the Wisconsin Child Support Reform Demonstration. The demonstration was authorized in July 1983, when the Wisconsin legislature enacted a budget bill that directed the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to contract with ten of
Wisconsin's 72 counties to withhold child support payments from the income of all new obligors (i.e., nonresident (absent) parents ordered to pay support in cases coming to court after the contract date). The budget bill also required DHSS to publish a child support standard based on a percentage of the nonresident parent's income for use by judges and family court commissioners in establishing child support award levels. The standard was published by DHSS in December 1983. It provides for a child support obligation equal to 17% of the obligor's gross income for one child, and 25, 29, 31, and 34% respectively for two, three, four, and five or more children.

The evaluation was designed to enable both a cross-country and a before/after comparison of the effects of immediate income assignment on child support orders, payments, and welfare recipiency. In addition, it allowed a before and after comparison of the effects of the publication of the standard on award levels. Data were obtained from a random sample of family court divorce and paternity cases within the ten counties piloting automatic income assignment and ten similar (control) counties. The predemonstration sample included support-eligible cases that commenced with a first petition for paternity adjudication or court appearance at some point from July 1, 1980, through June 30, 1983. The demonstration sample extended from January 1, 1984, through September 30, 1986. We used a sample of 1,765 paternity cases, representing over 5,733 paternities established in the twenty counties during the sampling period.

From the paternity court records we attempted to obtain basic demographic information—age, employment, income amounts and sources, age of child, and the amount of the child support order. Unfortunately, in a substantial number of the cases, data on employment and income were not furnished in the court record. In addition, dates and amounts of payments were obtained from the county office of the Clerk of Courts. (Wisconsin law mandates that child support payments be made through the Clerk's office.)

To determine welfare recipiency rates, the paternity sample was matched with Wisconsin AFDC records. The AFDC data
included the amount of the AFDC payment and the number of months of recipiency (if any) for each case in the sample.

Trends

**Trends in Paternity Adjudication**

Current efforts to obtain more child support for the population of never-married mothers depend upon increasing the number of paternity adjudications. Enhancing award levels and collections will have no effect on these families unless their eligibility for child support is first established. We assumed that adjudications would increase as a result of the Wisconsin Child Support Demonstration for three reasons. First, the attention focused on collecting child support within the experimental programs would spill over to other problems related to child support. Second, if immediate income assignments improve collections within the experimental counties, these counties would have more resources available to devote to paternity adjudication. Finally, we assumed that when never-married mothers realize that if they obtain a paternity adjudication they are likely to receive a child support payment, they will be motivated to establish the paternity of their children. Thus, income assignments, which help assure payments, should increase the probability that individuals will pursue the establishment of paternity.

Unfortunately, our data do not provide us with an estimate of changes in the paternity adjudication rate across time. To accurately determine any increase in the adjudication rate we would need to compare the number of paternity adjudications in each year with the total number of nonmarital children for whom paternity establishment was needed.\(^2\) Such a count is not available, so we compare instead the yearly number of adjudications to the numbers of nonmarital births. Although the adjudications could be for babies born in previous years, the comparison does give us an indication of trends over time. These data are presented in Table 1 for our experimental and control counties. It should be noted that we have used the numbers of adjudications reported by each of the counties rather
than the counts from our court record data. Because several of our court record cohorts do not cover an entire calendar year, using reported adjudications is a better measure for comparison with the yearly number of nonmarital births. However, counties were not required to report the number of adjudications prior to 1982.

Table 1

*Trends in Nonmarital Births, Nonmarital Children on AFDC, and Numbers of Paternity Adjudications across Years and by Experimental and Control Counties*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Paternity Adjudications</th>
<th>Number of Nonmarital Births</th>
<th>Ratio of Paternity Adjudications to Nonmarital Births</th>
<th>Number of Never-Married Families</th>
<th>Ratio of Paternity Adjudications to Never-Married AFDC Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control counties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1,510</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3,050</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>734</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>3,295</td>
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</tr>
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<td>.61</td>
<td>3,648</td>
<td>.26</td>
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<td>.60</td>
<td>3,991</td>
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<td>1,754</td>
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<td>.27</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1,291</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>2,796</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>1,457</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>2,796</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>1,519</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>3,242</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Maternal and Child Health Statistics, Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Health, Madison, Wis. County Adjudication Reports, Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Child Support, Madison, Wis. AFDC Case-load Data, Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Economic Assistance, Madison, Wis.
Table 1 also includes data on the average monthly number of families of never-married mothers in the AFDC caseload. The majority of adjudications are initiated by the AFDC program. Thus, a change in the adjudication rate might be an artifact of a change in the numbers of nonmarital children in the AFDC caseload. For example, if the ratio of adjudications to nonmarital births increases over time while the ratio of paternity adjudications to the never-married AFDC population is relatively unchanged, we might conclude that the increase in the overall paternity adjudication ratio is a function of increased AFDC recipiency among never-married mother families rather than an increased focus on child support issues. That is, the adjudication ratio is being driven by an increase in the likelihood of being an AFDC recipient, not in the likelihood of having paternity adjudicated among the recipient population.

We can see from Table 1 that both the ratio of paternity adjudications to nonmarital births and the ratio of adjudications to the number of never-married AFDC families increased between 1982 and 1986. This suggests that the paternity adjudication rate is increasing net of the AFDC recipiency rate.

Although it was expected that after the introduction of the demonstration in 1984, experimental counties would have higher ratios of paternity adjudication to nonmarital births than control counties, we do not see a substantial difference until 1986. Two explanations for the delayed effect are likely. First, to the detriment of paternity establishment, the experimental counties may well have initially focused their resources on the implementation of the immediate income assignment. Second, the number of nonmarital births increased substantially during both 1984 and 1985, and it is likely that the paternity adjudication system was unprepared to accommodate these additional cases.

The 1986 ratios do suggest, however, that Wisconsin's efforts to improve its child support system have resulted in an increase in establishing paternity for nonmarital children, so that they can obtain child support payments. But it is unclear to what extent the establishment of paternity will result in child support awards, increased payments, or a reduction in welfare dependency. If the increase in adjudications brings into the system
fathers with less ability to pay child support, we may actually see a decrease in the percentage of paternity cases with child support awards. And among those awards, average award levels and payments may be smaller, even with recent improvements in the child support system. Once paternity is adjudicated, however, a legal right has been established for awarding and collecting child support, at least until the child reaches the age of 18. If, as seems likely, the economic situation of the absent fathers improves in the future, we would expect the reform to significantly improve child support award levels and payments.

Changes in Child Support Awards and Payments over Time

An examination of paternity case characteristics over time provides some indication that the ability of fathers to pay child support has not decreased as the number of paternity adjudications has increased. Table 2 presents case characteristics at the time of adjudication, by cohort and by experimental and control county. The cohorts correspond to yearly case-selection sample periods, with the first cohort extending from July 1, 1980, through June 30, 1981, and the sixth cohort extending from October 1, 1985, through September 30, 1986. The sample includes cases potentially eligible for child support from the father during the sample period. All the descriptive data have been weighted to reflect population estimates.

Table 2
Characteristics of Wisconsin Paternity Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Predemonstration</th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sample cases</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of father</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of mother</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of child</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Child Support Enforcement Reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>32</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>37</th>
<th>29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing info.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing info.</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average monthly income</th>
<th>$766</th>
<th>$814</th>
<th>$548</th>
<th>$739</th>
<th>$697</th>
<th>$1161</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% with missing info.</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental counties</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of father</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of mother</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of child</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing info.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing info.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Monthly Income</th>
<th>$752</th>
<th>$1154</th>
<th>$530</th>
<th>$517</th>
<th>$790</th>
<th>$782</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% with missing info.</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% with missing info.</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with missing info.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Includes only those cases in which mother has legal custody during sample period. All descriptive data are weighted to reflect population estimates.

The average age of the mothers, and to a lesser extent the average age of the fathers, has been increasing over time, and these somewhat older fathers seem to be doing better economically. Given the percentage of cases with missing information on parental employment status, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions, but the available data do suggest that, on average, fathers were more likely to be employed during the demonstration years. Average monthly income fluctuates considerably
across years, but it appears that the fathers in the control counties have greater monthly income in the last year (the income figures are in constant 1986 dollars). It is unclear whether this increase is a function of the "aging" of the sample, an improved economic climate in the state, or merely a bias in the data. Also, as expected, the mothers' incomes and employment rates are significantly lower than those of the fathers.

Table 3

Child Support Orders and Payments for Wisconsin Paternity Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Predemonstration</th>
<th></th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control counties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of paternity cases(^a) with child support order</td>
<td>81% 88% 59%</td>
<td>75% 77% 87%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly amount of order</td>
<td>$113 $115 $113</td>
<td>$104 $102 $107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of order to father's income(^b)</td>
<td>.21 .18 .23</td>
<td>.16 .20 .14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of cases with immediate income assignment</td>
<td>24% 9% 14%</td>
<td>28% 24% 47%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of cases making some payment</td>
<td>89% 77% 67%</td>
<td>89% 86% 72%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of payments made to owed</td>
<td>.41 .39 .45</td>
<td>.46 .52 .45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of months paid to owed</td>
<td>.42 .41 .45</td>
<td>.43 .50 .45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experimental counties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of paternity cases(^a) with child support order</td>
<td>89% 90% 72%</td>
<td>86% 82% 80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 presents information on child support orders and payments. No clear trend is evident across cohorts in the percentage of cases with a child support order, and in the experimental counties the average percentage of cases with awards actually decreased from the predemonstration to the demonstration period. It must be remembered, however, that during the demonstration period relatively more paternities were established. Thus, even with a decrease in the average percentage of paternity cases with orders, there may have been an increase in the percentage of all nonmarital children with awards. We can develop a crude estimate of the potential change in the percentage of awards for nonmarital children by using the data in Table 1. If we assume that the ratio of paternities to nonmarital births is a proxy for trends in the adjudication rate, multiplying the percentage of cases with orders times the adjudication ratio will give us an approximation of the change in the percentage of nonmarital children with awards. For example, in the experimental counties, the average ratio of paternity adjudications to nonmarital births increased by 6.7
percentage points from the predemonstration (1982 and 1983) to the demonstration (1984–86) period (from 53.9 to 60.6), whereas during that same period the average percentage of paternity cases with awards in the experimental counties decreased from 84 to 83%. Therefore, even though the percentage of paternity cases with awards decreased during the demonstration period, the percentage of all nonmarital children with orders has potentially increased from 45.5% in the predemonstration period (84% of the 53.9% with paternity adjudicated) to 50.3% in the demonstration period (83% of the 60.6% with paternity adjudicated).

The increase in the rate of paternity adjudication is also a likely explanation of why there is no clear trend in the average order amount (in constant dollars) in the experimental counties, and why the average order actually decreased in the control counties during the demonstration cohorts (see Table 3). If, as was previously discussed, more cases in which the father has lower ability to pay have entered the system, we would expect lower orders. Interestingly, in the control counties, where the average income of the fathers is somewhat higher in the later years (Table 2), the average amount of the child support orders is lower. An explanation for this seeming inconsistency may be that in the control counties, a greater number of fathers with missing income information have minimal income. This assumption is confirmed somewhat by the relatively comparable ratio of orders to income in the demonstration years between the groups (Table 3). The ratio of orders to income on those cases with available income information also suggests that the publication of the percentage-of-income standard in 1983 may be having a negative effect on the order amount. Prior to the publication, the average award was above the 17% stipulated for one child, whereas, postpublication, the order was more likely to be under 17%. The most obvious trend evident in Table 3 is the increase in immediate income assignments and the indicators of child support payments in the experimental counties during the demonstration period. There was considerable growth in the percentage of cases making some payment, in the ratio of child support payments made to payments owed, and in the ratio of months paid to owed after the introduction of immedi-
ate income assignment. In addition, the experimental counties appear to do better on each of these measures than the control counties during the demonstration period.

Use of mandatory income assignment is far from universal in the experimental counties. Previous research on the Wisconsin reform suggests that the lack of assignments is partly due to the payer not having assignable income and partly to the unwillingness of judges to use assignments in all cases (Garfinkel, 1986).

Two points of information will clarify the numbers of income assignments in the predemonstration period and the rise in assignments in the last cohort for the control counties. First, prior to the implementation of the experiment, individuals could voluntarily agree to an immediate income assignment. One large control county, in particular, encouraged fathers to use this type of “easy payment plan,” thus accounting for the higher rates of income assignments in the control counties during the predemonstration period. Second, in anticipation of statewide implementation of immediate income assignment by January 1987, the Wisconsin legislature permitted additional counties to begin applying immediate assignments in 1986. Several of the control counties began using assignments in that year. There is one apparent anomaly in the increased use of immediate assignments by control counties just prior to mandatory implementation in 1987. Between the fifth and sixth cohorts, there was a 23 percentage point increase in the use of immediate income assignments in the control counties, yet, during that same period, the ratio of payments made to owed dropped from .52 to .45. This appears to suggest that the increased use of income assignments has a negative effect on payments. However, information gathered in the first few months during which income assignments were used in the experimental counties suggests that a decrease in payment performance for counties beginning to use immediate assignment would likely be a result of implementation lag.

Determinants of Child Support Payment Performance

These data seem to indicate that automatic income assignment does have a significant effect on the payment of child
support in paternity cases. However, the descriptive data do not give us a clear picture of how much of the effect is attributable to the use of assignments and how much might be attributable to county or case differences. To make this assessment, regression analysis was utilized. The sample includes only those cases with a child support order during the sample period, and the dependent variable is either the ratio of child support paid to child support owed or the months of child support paid to the months owed. The first dependent variable measures the amount of payment and the second measures the consistency of those payments. These measures are used because changes in either will potentially affect the welfare dependency of the mothers and children. (For further discussion of this point, see section on effects on welfare dependency, below.) A tobit model was used because of the relatively large number of cases with zero dollars and months paid.

In the first set of regressions (Table 4) the effect of the use of immediate income assignment is assessed by assigning those cases with assignments a 1 and those without assignments a 0. Other independent variables include the cohort in which the case entered the sample (to control for potential changes over time); the total number of months that child support payments were owed (to control for the effects of erosion in payment over time); the father's employment status and age at the time of the initial court order (our best available proxies for the father's ability to pay child support); and the county from which the case was selected (to control for county differences). The results indicate that an immediate income assignment increases both the relative amount of child support paid and the consistency of the payment. The tobit coefficients cannot be directly interpreted as percentages but they can be used to calculate the expected change in the observed dependent variable (Madala, 1983). From the calculated percentages we find that, all else being equal, the use of an immediate income assignment is expected to raise the average ratio of payments made to owed by 21.2 percentage points and the months paid to owed by 17.8 percentage points. One cannot assume from these results, however, that if all paternity cases with child support orders were given an immediate income assignment the average payment
ratios would increase by this amount. If there are unmeasured characteristics of the case and/or payer that increase the likelihood of an income assignment being ordered and are correlated with payment performance, these results will overestimate the effects of income assignments. To control for this potential bias, the income assignment variable was replaced by an experimental county variable. Cases were given a 1 if they were in an experimental county during the demonstration period and a 0 if not. This variable measures the average effect on payment performance of being in an experimental county during the demonstration years, regardless of each individual case’s likelihood of having an immediate assignment. Table 5 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 4

Tobit Analysis of Effects of Immediate Income Assignment on Child Support Payment Measures for Paternity Caseload

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dollars/Paid Dollars Owed</th>
<th></th>
<th>Months Paid/ Months Owed Coef. S.E. Coef. S.E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income assignment</td>
<td>18.67*** 4.92</td>
<td>18.99** 4.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2</td>
<td>-.52 6.68</td>
<td>-4.26 5.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 3</td>
<td>-8.98 8.24</td>
<td>-12.82 6.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 4</td>
<td>7.77 6.74</td>
<td>4.39 6.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 5</td>
<td>12.41 6.91</td>
<td>6.83 6.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 6</td>
<td>-10.41 8.69</td>
<td>-15.01* 7.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months CS owed</td>
<td>-.44 .29</td>
<td>-.86*** .23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's empl. status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>21.8*** 4.25</td>
<td>20.94*** 3.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing info.</td>
<td>3.34 5.12</td>
<td>5.91 4.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 29</td>
<td>1.26 4.89</td>
<td>3.41 4.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 39</td>
<td>2.64 6.05</td>
<td>2.76 5.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+</td>
<td>14.05 8.01</td>
<td>11.76 6.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing info.</td>
<td>19.57 12.42</td>
<td>18.60 10.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5

**Tobit Analysis of Effects of Experimental County Status on Child Support Payment Measures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dollars/Paid Dollars Owed</th>
<th>Months Paid/Months Owed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coef.</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental county</td>
<td>12.83*</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>6.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Child Support Enforcement Reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort 3</th>
<th>Cohort 4</th>
<th>Cohort 5</th>
<th>Cohort 6</th>
<th>Months CS owed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-7.93</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>-7.10</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>8.92</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-11.62</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>-11.33</td>
<td>-0.79***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.91</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father's empl. status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.34***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.52***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing info.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father's age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20–29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.17</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>45.28***</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mean of dep. var.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 1191</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>-4731.7</td>
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</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
We can see that being an experimental county increases both dependent variables. These coefficients, however, are neither as large nor as statistically significant as the income assignment coefficient presented in Table 4. Again, estimating the percentage change from the tobit coefficients indicates that being in an experimental county increases the ratio of dollars paid to owed by 14.3 percentage points and the months paid to owed by 15.5 percentage points. It must be remembered, however, that some of the control counties also increased their use of immediate income assignments during the later years. Thus the experimental county coefficients are likely to be an underestimate of the effects of the implementation of income assignments. Therefore, the true effect of immediate income assignments on payment performance in paternity cases probably lies somewhere between the two estimates of 21 and 14% for dollars paid to owed, and 18 and 15% for months paid to owed. That is, the use of immediate income assignment raises the average of payments paid to owed from .45 to between .59 and .66, and months paid to owed from .43 to between .58 and .61.

In both sets of equations, these effects are estimated after controlling for a variety of other variables. An examination of the other coefficients indicates that fathers who are employed have significantly higher payment ratios. In fact, employment has a greater effect on payment performance than the use of immediate income assignments. Given that in our sample of paternity cases less than 50% were employed, it is not surprising that average payment performance is relatively poor.

Effects on Welfare Dependency

The major impetus for public policy intervention within the private child support system is to reduce the welfare dependency of single-mother families. Although our data suggest that income assignments in Wisconsin have increased the payment of child support and the consistency of payments for those who have had the paternity of their children established, we do not know if this translates into decreased welfare dependency for these families. To assess the effects of immediate income assignments on welfare dependency, each paternity case with a child support order was matched, using social security numbers, to
Wisconsin AFDC records. With the AFDC record match we were able to determine the number of months of recipiency (if any) for each case in the sample and the amount of the AFDC payment.

Table 6 presents descriptive data on trends in AFDC recipiency for our sample of paternity cases with others. The percentage of cases on AFDC at the time of the initial petition to establish paternity, and the percentage on AFDC after the receipt of a child support award do not show any clear trends over time. The data do indicate that, on average, between 75 and 80% of all paternity cases with child support orders are AFDC recipients when the process of paternity adjudication is started. This suggests that the welfare system is instrumental in the establishment of paternity for nonmarital children. The noticeable exception to these high percentages is during cohort 1, and to some extent during cohort 2. Unfortunately, our data do not provide us with any explanation for the lower percentages in these cohorts. In addition, it is clear from these data that being on AFDC when petitioning for a paternity adjudication increases the likelihood that the case will receive an immediate income assignment if it is in an experimental county during the demonstration period. This implies that the welfare system may not only be instrumental in the adjudication of paternity, but also in assuring that the income assignment reform is implemented for individuals receiving welfare.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFDC Recipiency among Wisconsin Paternity Cases with Child Support Orders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predemonstration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohort</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases with orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage on AFDC at time of petition to establish paternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cases on AFDC at petition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cases not on AFDC at petition</td>
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Note: Sample sizes vary because of missing data on social security numbers or AFDC benefit amounts.
In most instances the percentage of cases ever on AFDC after a child support award has been established exceeds the percentage on at the time of the petition for adjudication. Obviously the greater length of time increases the likelihood of recipiency. When the percentage is lower, for example in the control counties during cohort 3, it indicates that some of the cases which were on AFDC at the time they petitioned for an adjudication exited before they received child support orders. While there is not a clear trend in the percentage ever on AFDC after the receipt of an award, the data do indicate that (excluding cohort 1) mothers were less likely to be dependent on AFDC in the experimental counties after the demonstration started. This may be an indication that the income assignment reform, and its concomitant increase in child support payments, is reducing the need for AFDC.

More accurate measures of AFDC dependency, however, are the ratio of months on AFDC to months eligible for a child support payment (i.e., after an award), and the average net monthly AFDC benefit received during the months the case was eligible for a child support payment. The first measure captures the changes in the percentage of cases with awards that are ever on AFDC as well as changes in the average number of months on AFDC. The second measure is an average of the monthly AFDC benefit minus any child support received that month. Cases not on AFDC in a given month are assigned a $0 net benefit. From these two measures we can determine if, on average, nonmarital children with child support orders in our sample are spending proportionately more or less time on AFDC, and if, on average, more or less dollars are being expended each month on benefits to these children and their families.

Although it is anticipated that assignments will lead to reductions in AFDC benefits and months receiving benefits during the demonstration period, this may not be the case. If, as in Table 3 may indicate, the average award amount decreases during the demonstration period, an increase in the percentage of child support paid may not result in an increase in the average dollars of child support received, and thus the net AFDC benefit will not decrease. Furthermore, an increase in consistency of the child support payment may not decrease the number of months
an individual receives AFDC. For example, if the average gross AFDC benefit is $100 per month, the average child support payment is $50 a month, and the ratio of months paid to owed is 100 percent, the case will continue to receive AFDC each month.

From the descriptive data in Table 6, it appears that in the control counties the average paternity case spends more time on AFDC and receives more in net benefits during the demonstration period than in the predemonstration period. However, in the experimental counties (if we exclude cohort 1) both time on AFDC and average monthly benefits decreased somewhat after the demonstration began. The income assignment may, therefore, be having an effect on welfare dependency.

We used regression analysis to determine if income assignments, rather than other factors, are influencing our measures of welfare dependency. Tobit estimation was again used to take into account the percentage of cases that receive no AFDC. The dependent variable is either the ratio of months on AFDC to months eligible for a child support payment, or the average net monthly AFDC benefit during the months eligible for a child support payment. As in the previous regressions, separate models were run using experimental county and income assignment as the independent variables of interest. Also included in the model are variables to control for case and county characteristics that may affect either AFDC recipiency or child support payment. These variables are the cohort, the number of months child support payments are owed, the county, the father’s and the mother’s employment status at the time of the initial court order, the age of the child, and the age of the mother. To control for the possible confounding effects of changes in the amount of the child support award over time, and the strong correlation between being an AFDC recipient at the time of the paternity petition and having an income assignment, the order amount and whether or not a case was on AFDC at the time of petition were also included as independent variables.

Table 7 presents the coefficients and standard errors on the experimental county and income assignment variables. (An example of the full regression is included in the Appendix.) The only significant coefficient is the effect of living in an experimental county on the percentage of time on AFDC. Interestingly,
the coefficient is positive, which suggests that being in an experimental county during the demonstration period increases, rather than decreases, the percentage of time on AFDC. The size and strength of this coefficient makes our result suspect. It is likely that this model is not adequately controlling for the fact that being on AFDC at the time of the petition increases the likelihood that a case will be given an income assignment—particularly in the experimental counties. The data presented in Table 6 suggest that not only does having an income assignment affect AFDC recipiency, but that AFDC recipients are more likely than others to have an income assignment. Unfortunately, assessing the effect of income assignments on our measures of AFDC dependency, net of the effect of AFDC on income assignment, is beyond the scope of this paper. We can, however, examine the effects of income assignments for all cases on AFDC at the time they petition for a paternity adjudication. These results are presented in Table 8.

Table 7

*Effects of Living in Experimental County and Having Immediate Income Assignment on AFDC Dependency Measures, for All Cases with Child Support Orders*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Percentage of Sample Time of AFDC Coef.</th>
<th>Average Monthly/ AFDC Payment Coef.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Income assignment</td>
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<td>Coef. 7.08</td>
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</table>

Although the coefficient for experimental county is still positive, it and all of the other coefficients are not statistically significant. Evidently neither being in an experimental county nor having an income assignment has any effect on our measures of the welfare dependency of individuals who were on AFDC at the time of their petition for a paternity judgment.
Table 8

Effects of Living in Experimental County and Having Immediate Income Assignment on AFDC Dependency Measures, for Cases on AFDC at Petition Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Percentage of Sample</th>
<th>Average Monthly/Time of AFDC</th>
<th>AFDC Payment</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Income assignment</td>
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<td>-11.59</td>
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Conclusions

Our conclusions paint a relatively pessimistic picture about the ability of current reforms in the enforcement of the child support obligation to reduce welfare dependency among the paternity caseload. Although our analyses confirm that a reform such as automatic income assignment can increase child support payments for this group, the results indicate that the average percentage of child support paid is still only two-thirds of what is owed. And given the fact that the average child support award for our sample was less than $115 per month, it is not surprising that there were no significant effects of income assignment on our measure of welfare dependency.

On the other hand, our data suggest that we are having some success in increasing paternity adjudication and bringing a greater percentage of nonmarital children into the child support system. Thus, while income assignments are related to rather modest increases in payment levels, proportionately more nonmarital children are receiving those payments. And although our data do not allow us to measure changes in welfare dependency among all nonmarital children, it is likely that a proportionately greater number are less dependent upon the welfare system because they receive some child support.

These results support the position that we must focus our attention on adjudicating paternity as well as enforcing child support obligations for this population. However, if the current
Child Support Enforcement Reform

paternity caseload is at all representative of nonmarital children who have not had paternity established, expecting the child support system to solve the problem of welfare dependency and poverty among families of never-married mothers is unrealistic. Because the fathers of these children lack economic resources, it is unlikely that they will pay sufficient amounts of child support to adequately support their children, at least in the short term.

These findings argue for additional strategies to improve the economic well-being of nonmarital children and their mothers. Unfortunately, they may also reinforce the attitude of many in the child support system that directing attention to the nonmarital child is not cost effective. What is often forgotten, however, is that enforcing the child support obligation is more than a mechanism for obtaining adequate financial support for children and reducing welfare caseloads. It also establishes a legal basis for the nonmarital child to claim the same paternal rights as the marital child. And maybe even more importantly, it is a message to parents that, as a society, we expect both parents to assume responsibility for their children. To allow a father to abrogate that responsibility because his child was born outside of a marriage is not only inequitable, it is poor public policy.

References


Notes

1. Data from the baseline sample were followed until June 30, 1984. Thus, each case has a minimum of 12 months of data, and a maximum of 36 months. The demonstration cases were followed until January 31, 1987, again giving us a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of 36 months of data.

2. Paternity establishment is only needed for those children who are not adopted or whose parents do not marry. Although we refer throughout this paper to "never-married" mothers as requiring a paternity adjudication, married mothers may also require an adjudication if the person they marry is not the father of their children and does not choose to adopt them.

3. A numerical example may help clarify this point. Assume that in one year there were 100 nonmarital births, 200 nonmarital children on AFDC, and 20 paternity adjudications. The ratio of adjudications to all births is .20 and the ratio of adjudications to nonmarital AFDC children is .10. If in the next year there were again 100 nonmarital births, but the number of nonmarital children on AFDC increased to 225 and the number of paternity adjudications increased to 25. The ratio of adjudications to all births has now increased to .25, however the ratio to AFDC children has only increased to .11. Because most paternities are initiated by the AFDC system we would conclude from this example that the majority of the increase in the overall ratio is due to an increased likelihood that a nonmarital child will be on AFDC, but once on AFDC, his/her likelihood of having paternity adjudicated has not improved much from the previous year.

4. Cohort 1 contains a sample of all cases that entered the court system from July 1, 1980, through June 30, 1981. The time frame for the other cohorts is as follows: Cohort 2, July 1, 1981, through June 30, 1982; Cohort 3, July 1, 1982, through June 30, 1983; Cohort 4, January 1, 1984, through October 1, 1984; Cohort 5, October 1, 1984, through
September 30, 1985; and Cohort 6, October 1, 1985, through September 20, 1986.

5. Cases in which the mother was not the legal custodian of the child were excluded. Also excluded were cases in which the petition date fell within our sampling period but the date of paternity adjudication, and thus eligibility for a child support order, occurred after the end of the sampling period. The exclusion of these cases reduced the sample from 1,765 cases to 1,556 cases.

6. Weighting is done to obtain population estimates from the sample. Each case is assigned a weighting factor. This weighting factor is a ratio of the total number of paternity adjudications filed in the county from which the case was selected during the year the case entered the sample, to the number of paternities in our sample in that county and year. For example, a sample case weight of 3 means that each case in our sample represents 3 cases in the population of paternity cases for that county and sample year.

7. As noted previously, these ratios are not an accurate measure of the adjudication rate. They are only to be used as an approximation of the trends over time.

8. The average adjudication ratios were calculated by dividing the total number of paternities adjudicated in the period by the total number of nonmarital births during the same period. For example, in the experimental counties during the predemonstration period (1982-83) there were 1,314 adjudications (594 + 720) and 2,440 births (1,247 + 1,193), giving a ratio of .539 or 53.9 percent. Thus, 53.9 percent of all nonmarital children have paternity adjudicated and are potentially eligible for a child support award. During the demonstration period, 60.6 percent of all nonmarital children had paternity adjudicated—an increase of 6.7 percentage points from the predemonstration period. The percentage of paternity cases with awards during the period is just the average of the yearly percentages. For example, in the experimental counties during the predemonstration period the average percentage is (.89 + .90 + .72)/3, or 84 percent. The comparable percentage during the demonstration period was 83 percent.

9. The same holds true in the control counties, where the percentage of nonmarital children with predemonstration orders was 42.6 and with demonstration orders, was 49.

10. For this analysis a two-limit tobit was used because the pay-to-owe ratios (multiplied by 100) were restricted to between 0 and 100. The two-limit tobit takes into account that the observed variable cannot be less than 0 or greater than 100, by simultaneously estimating the probability of observing a value of 0 or 100. The coefficients measure how the unrestricted (latent) dependent variable would change with changes in the explanatory variables.

11. Approximately 4 percent of the court record sample (51 cases) were
missing social security numbers and thus had to be omitted from this analysis.

12. Two-limit tobits are used for the proportion of time on AFDC because this variable is observed only between 0 and 100. However, the net AFDC benefit does not have a fixed upper limit, so the regressions are run using a tobit with a single limit at 0.

13. The child for whom paternity has been established. Although the ages and number of other children in the family would be an appropriate variable to include in our regressions, we do not have this information in our court record data.

14. Father's age was not used because it was not a significant predictor in the payment regressions and because of the strong correlation between mother's and father's age.
Appendix Table A.1

Tobit Regression of Effects of Living in Experimental County on AFDC Dependency Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Percentage of Sample Time on AFDC</th>
<th>Average Monthly AFDC Payment</th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Experimental county</td>
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<td>16.16</td>
<td>38.85</td>
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<td>Cohort 3</td>
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<td>11.13</td>
<td>13.46</td>
<td>-72.74</td>
<td>49.22</td>
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<td>42.37</td>
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<td>12.29</td>
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<td>36.03</td>
<td>41.67</td>
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<td>15.56</td>
<td>13.72</td>
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<td>49.23</td>
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<td>Months CS owed</td>
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The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 and the Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 have imposed conflicting mandates on the public child welfare system. CAPTA places the moral weight of the federal government behind professional intervention with troubled families, while the Adoptions Assistance Act was designed to protect the autonomy of families. As these policies currently stand, the goal of protection of vulnerable children is seriously undermined.

One of the major themes in child welfare since the Progressive Era has been a growing commitment to the emotional, social and economic dependence of children. The belief in the legitimacy of this dependence is at the center of child welfare policy, especially policies designed to prevent child abuse and neglect and those intending to provide substitute care for children. This paper presents an analysis of two policies designed to promote the goal of protection of dependent children: the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (1974) and the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (1980). The article begins by offering an historical perspective of the emergence of the belief in childhood vulnerability in the Progressive Era and discusses subsequent efforts to fashion a set of policies that would consistently insure the protection of children. The tension between family rights and the necessity for public intervention in family life has been an ongoing theme in child welfare policy since the progressive Era; this theme was sharply outlined in the debates surrounding the passage of the two landmark federal policies which currently underlie public child welfare practices.
The contradictory hypotheses of these policies has led to conflicting mandates for child protective services which constrain the best efforts of child welfare professionals to safeguard vulnerable children.

The Progressive Era and the Emergence of Child Welfare

Throughout the colonial period and well into the 19th century, all but the children of the wealthiest families were viewed largely in economic terms: as an asset to the family or, in cases where there was no viable family, a burden to the state. It is this perspective which undergirded the system of apprenticeship or "binding out" of dependent children in the 18th and 19th centuries. Public care of children was limited to almshouses, orphanages and houses of reform for much of the 19th century (Rothman, 1971). Public concern for the emotional well-being of children and their developmental and social needs awaited a confluence of factors: the emergence of the child saving movement at the end of the 19th century; the discovery of child abuse as a social problem in the same period; and the increasing demand for skilled labor facilitating the passage of child labor laws in many states around the turn of the century.

Another sign of the increased legitimacy of the conception of childhood vulnerability was the passage of laws in several states at the end of the 19th century removing children from almshouses, where many had been confined alongside adult poor, some of whom were mentally disordered (Folks, 1902; Bremner, 1972). These policies were seen as humanitarian efforts to subtract children from the economic equation of industrialization. While the child labor laws presented poorer families with severe hardships, they also set the stage for a less instrumental view of children than had existed previously.

In terms of public policy, during the Progressive Era children began to be seen as having substantially different needs than adults; vulnerability became a major characteristic of childhood. This conviction demanded that adults insure the child's protection and proper development.
White House Conference on Youth

The question of how best to protect children and insure their proper development was first addressed in a public forum at the first White House Conference on Youth in 1909. Conference participants strongly endorsed family care of poor children as a far preferable alternative to institutionalization in almshouses or orphanages. The theme of family as the most important factor in child development had not been a significant one before this Conference; its emphasis there gave an important boost to Progressive reformers crusade to provide financial assistance for widowed or abandoned mothers caring for their children in their own homes (Gibson and Lewis, 1980). By 1913, 20 states had enacted mother’s pensions to enable children from poorer families to be cared for in their own homes rather than in institutions (Bremner, 1972).

The Growth of Foster Care

In highlighting the importance of a family environment for children, reformers also gave impetus to the trend toward foster care that had been evident since 1853, when Charles Loring Brace organized the Children’s Aid Society in New York to send homeless children West where they were cared for by rural families. Almost 20,000 children were sent West in the first 20 years of the Society’s operation (Folks, 1902; Bremner, 1972). As the creation of the Children’s Bureau in 1912 focused more attention on children, foster care too gained increased legitimacy as a way to care for vulnerable children. It is important to note that during the Progressive Era, foster care originally was seen as a means of preserving family values, not as constituting a challenge to those values.

The Rise of Child Protection

The theme of protecting children from family abuse developed separately from that of promoting family life as the strongest guarantee of children’s well being, but it too was linked to the emerging view of children as dependent and vulnerable. The now famous case of Mary Ellen, a child severely abused by her foster mother in 1874, has been described
frequently as responsible for the creation and legitimation of protective services for children (Richett and Hudson, 1979; Nelson, 1984). As a result of this case and the subsequent creation of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the formerly private arena of parent-child relationships began to be subject to public intervention, initially from private agencies with public mandates (like the NYPCC). Progressive reformers were later to question the intrusiveness of these agencies, which they felt unfairly disrupted poor families. Instead these reformers urged a reaffirmation of the superior value of the home and family unit as the best means of insuring the child's well-being. Nevertheless, the principle of child protection had been legislated in most Eastern states by the end of the 19th century and would reemerge with vigor in the 1960s (Nelson, 1984).

During the Progressive Era the tensions evident in current child welfare policy were first formulated: what were the respective roles of the family and the state in the protection of the vulnerable child? The assumption that the child should be instrumental in meeting the needs of the family had been replaced by the conviction that the family had the duty to be instrumental in the development of the child. This duty implied a public responsibility to guarantee its fulfillment and would ultimately claim considerable public resources.

Conflicts in Contemporary Child Welfare Policy

Since the Progressive era, the power of the government to intervene in family life has increased substantially. In spite of the firmly established principle of government intervention on behalf of the child and the commitment of public resources to the goal of protection, a perception exists that public child welfare has not accomplished its mission (Besharov, 1983; Besharov, 1987; Cox and Cox, 1984; Faller, 1985). The feeling that public child welfare has not entirely succeeded in its mandate is linked to the continuing increase in reports of child abuse. In particular, the increase in the number of child fatalities due to maltreatment has quickened public interest in the protective service system (National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research, 1987; Little Hoover Commission, 1987).
At least part of the reason for the difficulties faced by child welfare workers in their efforts to carry out their mandates to protect children lies in conflicting contemporary policies which embody the same unresolved conflicts about the family and the government originating in the Progressive Era. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-247) positioned the federal government to assume a proactive role in the detection, and to a far lesser extent, prevention and treatment of child abuse, especially as it occurs in the family. This legislation put the moral weight of the federal government behind the necessity for professional intervention in the family unit in cases of suspected abuse or neglect. The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (PL 96-272) embodied the ethos of permanency planning, and shifted the support of the federal government away from intervention in the family system, and towards placement prevention and reunification. In short, the Adoptions Assistance Act of 1980 casts the federal government in the role of protector of the family from outside interference.

Social Origins of the Two Policies

Both of these policies evolved from a new interest in children’s rights that appeared as part of the wider movements of the 1970s (Pine, 1986). The movement for social equality and civil liberties of the 1960s and early 1970s, which transformed the ways members of minority groups and women defined themselves, also sought to reorder the relationship of members of these groups to the political and economic structures in the country. These movements for social equality focused attention on the rights of children, especially since the denial of these rights was perceived to be intimately tied to the oppression of women. The movement for children’s rights followed logically out of these gender and ethnic based struggles for equality. The disillusionments attendant on the Vietnam War and Watergate also led to the recognition that sanctioned authority (including parental authority) could be oppressive, that its legitimacy was open to question and that advocacy on behalf of those underrepresented in systems of power was legitimate and even necessary.
The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 was fashioned out of this ethos, although it received its immediate impetus from media attention to the "battered child syndrome" in the late 1960s and early 1970s. New attention had been directed to the problem of abused children as a result of a series of investigations of childhood injuries by the medical profession in the late 1940s and 1950s. In 1962, C. Henry Kempe published "The Battered-Child Syndrome" in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, thereby establishing a new definition of an old social problem (Kemp). The public interest in child welfare grew as a result of the publicity generated by this article, leading every state to enact legislation between 1963 and 1967 encouraging the reporting of child abuse (Richett and Hudson, 1979; Nelson, 1984).

The Adoptions Assistance Act of 1980 reflected the same interest in protecting the rights of vulnerable children as had CAPTA, but it also was a product of the more conservative climate of the Carter administration and its concern for family values (Antler, 1978). An eagerness to protect the family from outside influences, especially what were seen as the social, moral and governmental excesses of the late 1960s and early 1970s, characterized the political rhetoric of the Carter administration. This climate led to a reaction to the growth of the foster care system, which was seen as infringing on family rights. Federal support for foster care had come in the form of the Social Security Act Amendments of 1962, which appropriated money for state sponsored child welfare services and provided federal funds for foster care for the first time. The availability of these funds increased the incentives for states to place children in foster care (Gibson and Lewis, 1980). The different strategies reflected in the policies are evident in an analysis of the hearings surrounding their passage. CAPTA is based on the assumption that professionals have the duty to intervene inside the boundaries of family life in order to insure the well-being of children. The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, on the other hand, is an effort to protect the family from the interference of the child welfare professional and the policies of the child welfare establishment. CAPTA, in short, seeks to protect children from parents who would misuse their authority, while the 1980
Act seeks to protect children from policies which undermine the authority of parents.

The Child Abuse Prevention and Training Act

CAPTA authorized limited government research into child abuse prevention and treatment; created a national clearinghouse for child abuse data, and established funding incentives to tighten up state reporting laws. The only provision of the 1974 law that suggested the increased role protective services were to have in the coming decade was a requirement that states must have personnel and facilities available for treatment as well as for reporting and investigating in order to receive federal funds. Since the problem of child abuse was viewed as limited to a small minority of psychologically disturbed families, the implications of this requirement for the dramatic increase in protective services was not anticipated by lawmakers. In fact, the perception that this low cost measure did not abridge any rights or forge any serious new federal commitments was critical to the passage of the act (Nelson, 1984).

After 1974 states revised their own reporting laws in line with CAPTA to qualify for federal funds. It was in this round of revisions that states added the “protective custody” provisions to mandatory reporting laws that were to have profound consequences for the growth in protective services (Nelson, 1984). Protective custody made explicit what had always been implicit in reporting laws: the necessity for direct intervention by child welfare professionals in the family system. In hindsight it is clear that the intentions of the sponsors of CAPTA and state reporting laws were confounded by their ignorance of the actual incidence of child abuse and the magnitude of reporting that would occur. By the time of the Congressional hearings on the renewal of the legislation in 1977 and 1981, however, there was a sense that the problem was far greater than had been believed in 1974, though exact figures were still elusive (House, Hearings, 1977, p. 2, 13, 134; House Hearings, 1981, pp. 44–45). In 1977 child abuse was considered to be of “epidemic” proportions, as protective service agencies in various states were flooded with reports of child abuse that overran the child welfare system (House Hearings, 1977, p. 28). In the 1981 hearings child abuse
similarly was described by one witness as reaching "alarming proportions" (House Hearings, 1981, p. 45). One physician testified in 1977 that in New York City reports of child abuse had increased dramatically since 1974. He complained that "We are being flooded with case reports but we don't investigate them. The children necessarily are being sacrificed." (House Hearings, 1977, p. 43.) Several states reported a dramatic increase in the reports of child abuse since the passage of CAPTA; one Massachusetts official told of a 700% increase (House Hearings, 1977, p. 85,89). The most important response to this increase in reports of child abuse was the urgent call for more professional training and services to treat abusing families and protect abused children. Social workers were frequently cited as the most critical professionals among those working in protective services. One NASW representative argued staunchly that the "social worker is the key professional in services to abused children and their families" (House Hearings, 1977, p. 24, 68, 116, 128; House Hearings, 1981, p. 33, 124–125).

In spite of the accumulation of convincing testimony that more than reporting laws were necessary to protect at risk children, Congress did not authorize any significant increase in funding for social services to vulnerable families. Instead, the blind faith that mandatory reporting would solve the problem of child abuse was reiterated in 1977 and in subsequent extensions of the original bill. Legislative myopia notwithstanding, it is not surprising that CAPTA and its extensions had the net effect of increasing professional and government intervention in family life, given the theme of professional expertise and intervention that was a leitmotif of the hearings. The perception of this interference has provoked several critics. One child welfare expert, Theodore Stein, characterized the legislation as providing for "coercive intervention into family life that is unprecedented in American history," and noted that it "jeopardizes the values that we place on family privacy and on parental autonomy" (1984, p. 302). Douglas Besharov, who has written extensively on issues of child protection, similarly pointed out "an unprecedented increase in the level of state intervention into private family matters over the past twenty years" (1985, p. 19). Governmental interven-
tion into the family has come from police officers, lawyers and judges; all are caught up increasingly in the nexus of family life.

The profession most concerned with child abuse and the one which has attracted the most public criticism is social work. Since public agencies mandated to receive child abuse reports were staffed with social workers, the connection in the public mind between child abuse and the social work profession was axiomatic. This connection was strengthened by the insistence of the lawmakers that the connection between poverty and child abuse be ignored. Lawmakers instead preferred to support what has been called the "myth of classlessness" in order to limit the scope of the problem to the individual, psychological realm (Pelton, 1981).

This emphasis implied a casework approach, one that was seen to be the domain of the profession of social work. This perspective on the problem precluded a critical look at child care services, nutrition, economic inequality, joblessness, and other factors impacting children at risk for abuse. Such a perspective, completely missing in the assumptions underlying CAPTA, would have revealed that the absence of public goods such as child care, prenatal and family nutrition programs were at least as significant in placing children at risk as the psychological problems presented by some parents. Failure to look at wider issues, such as joblessness and serious structural inequality that impact on the well-being of families, was a fundamental constraint on any policy attempt to protect children from abuse.

In spite of this narrow emphasis on the casework approach to the problem of child abuse, one unanticipated consequence of CAPTA was an adversarial relationship that tended to develop between the child welfare worker and the family. Due to the requirement for reporting and the consequent necessity of investigating incidents of suspected child abuse, child welfare workers have sometimes functioned more as detectives than as empathetic caseworkers or change agents (Faller, 1985). Since federal funding has not kept pace with the number of families who need services as a result of reporting laws, the ability of the child welfare professional to offer casework to clients has
been seriously compromised (Stein, 1984). Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that momentum gathered among policy makers for another look at public child welfare.

Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Act

The discontent with public child welfare in the wake of CAPTA was growing at the same time as the social work profession was taking another look at foster care, especially at the problem of "drift" and the consequent sense of instability and impermanence that seemed to be experienced by many children placed in foster homes (Maas and Engler, 1959). The clear implication of the problem of drift was that children were suffering in foster homes. Foster care itself emerged as a public issue two years after the passage of CAPTA. The ultimate result of the public concern expressed about the problems of foster care was the passage of the Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Reform Act of 1980 (PL 96-272).

During the several rounds of hearings in the late 1970s that preceded the enactment of the law, it became clear that foster care, which had been upheld in the Progressive Era as an important means of protecting family values, was now viewed as antithetical to those values. An important argument of those testifying before Congress was that the child welfare system was to blame for allowing this "drift" to take place by ignoring the biological parents, failing to monitor children in foster placements, and most importantly failing to work toward the goal of reunification of parents and children. One HEW official in 1979 summed up these problems as the "crisis of foster care" (House Hearings, 1979, p. 3). There was a strong sense that child welfare professionals were interfering unnecessarily in family life. An influential report prepared for the Subcommittee on Children and Youth of the Senate Committee on Labor and public Welfare in 1975 argued that preference should be "ordinarily given first to preserving the biological family; second to creating adoptive families; and third to placing children in stable foster homes" (Mott, 1975, p. 6). The priorities had shifted away from foster care because: "Central to the rights of a child are the rights to permanence, stability, continuity, and nurture during childhood." Foster care was not seen as able to
provide for these needs, partly because “Discussions between biological parents and case workers about the care children receive are likely to be infrequent and one-sided.” The report went on to explain that mothers have complained that “they were not consulted about alternatives to foster care for their children and that they had no say in the selection of the foster home for the child.” Furthermore, families were discouraged from seeing their children by “the caseworkers, the foster parents, or the distance they would have to travel to see them.” Caseworkers were criticized for prohibiting foster parents from “developing close emotional ties with the children placed in their care.” One of the major recommendations of the report was to “Limit intervention by the case worker wherever practical” (Mott, 1975, p. 1, 37). This assault on the competency of the casework was a dramatic reversal from the reliance on the professional intervention of the social worker that was a continuing theme in the CAPTA hearings.

In the 1976 House hearings the capriciousness of public child welfare was emphasized. Any possibility that professional skill and judgment were at the heart of the placement process was wholly eliminated: “The welfare department can place the child in virtually any licensed foster home or institution at its whim.” Voluntary placements were criticized; one witness argued that they are ‘informally coerced’ and that these placements should be outlawed for they provide “no independent check of a social worker’s determination that placement is necessary...” The entire child welfare establishment was assailed: “welfare departments are typically not accountable to anyone for what happens to these children, children who are voluntarily placed are quite often the orphans of the living;” and “Individual social workers and judges...make highly discretionary decisions” (House Hearings, 1976, p. 102, 37, 75, 83). In 1979 one representative of the Children’s Defense Fund testified in House Hearings that “an antifamily bias...pervades the policies and practices of the child welfare system.” Furthermore children in “child welfare systems are in double jeopardy because they are also subject to neglect by public officials who have responsibility for them.” The federal role “exacerbates both the antifamily bias and the public neglect of these children” through the support of the
foster placement system (House Hearings, 1979, pp. 135-136). A spokeswoman from the APWA sounded a dissident note when she argued that caseworkers in public child welfare were largely inexperienced; she suggested that money be spent on training and services, rather than solely on regulation of the child welfare departments (House Hearings, 1976, pp. 92-93). Yet regulations were far less costly than mounting elaborate training programs for caseworkers or funding comprehensive services for families at risk, a truism demonstrated by CAPTA.

Foster care itself was characterized as "long term confinement;" children were to be "deinstitutionalized." Congressmen were reminded of "illustration after illustration where foster care parents have abused children..." (House Hearings, 1976, pp. 37, 41). During the hearings that ultimately led to the passage of the 1980 act, there was some emphasis on economic and social problems of families at risk for foster placement. Some who testified made dramatic pleas for federally funded services for these families to prevent foster placement, including homemaker, child care and counseling services (Hearings, 1976, pp. 86, 93). Yet the commitment to provide these services was undermined by another more important theme: the cost saving that was anticipated with the contraction of the foster care system (Hearings, 1976; Hartley, 1984). Not surprisingly, while federal mechanisms for funding preventive and reunification services were built into the 1980 legislation, the amount appropriated has been far short of what was authorized. This failure to authorize funds has led many to question how many services are being provided to families, despite the requirement that "reasonable efforts" must be made to prevent the removal of the child from the home and to return those that have been removed (House Hearing, 1985, p. 169; Pine, 1986; Seaberg, 1986). Several observers have voiced concern that the low level of funding for services may be undermining the best intent of the law to provide for the welfare of children (Senate Hearings, 1985, pp. 37-39; House Hearings, 1985, pp. 84-85; Cox and Cox, 1984; Hartley, 1984; Faller, 1985).

Thus the 1980 legislation served a conservative purpose by fashioning a more laissez-faire approach to child welfare services and family life than had existed previously. The assump-
tion behind the 1980 Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Act was that protecting the family from outside interference was the best way to safeguard the interests of the child. This new form of child protection was often called child advocacy, partly in order to distinguish it from the more traditional and in some ways less credible child welfare (Richett and Hudson, 1979).

The 1980 Act did have several important consequences; one has apparently been to increase the number of children being discharged from foster homes, although this trend is apparently being offset by high reentry rates of children into foster care (Rzepnicki, 1987). Another important consequence has been the establishment of a system of review of foster placements by each state, necessary in order to qualify for foster care reimbursement. The requirements for periodic review, development of case plans and other tracking mechanisms, along with those provisions for due process for families, have no doubt served to help insure that children are less likely to 'drift' in foster care without the attention of caseworkers and the courts and so to promote the goal of permanency planning. But such regulations have also multiplied the paperwork of public child welfare workers and, combined with the increasing number of reports of child abuse received by state agencies, may have served to move them further away from the provision of services which would insure that children return home to families who are able to care for them (National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research). In fact, the ambiguous position of the child welfare professional interfering (as a result of the CAPTA mandate) with the privacy of the family has led to resentment among those who are the subject of child abuse investigations and has led to the formation of a powerful group known as VOCAL or Victims of Child Abuse Legislation. VOCAL was a powerful force in the passage of a recent law in California (SB243) which limits the authority of the protective service system to remove the child from the home in cases of physical abuse. The resentment felt by some clients of the protective services system compromises the ability of the caseworker to offer services and some argue may increase the risk for the child (Faller, 1985; Christopherson, 1983).
Foster Care and Protection of Children

Ironically, neither the temporary nature nor the detrimental effects of foster care assumed by policy makers have been supported by research. In reviewing studies of the effects of permanency planning on children, Seltzer and Bloksberg found that "no differences in adjustment have been found between children who were in permanent placements and those who are in temporary placements." They also found that adoption proved to be a more stable situation for children than did returning them to their biological homes from foster care (1987). In fact, recent evidence strongly suggests that children who are returned to their own homes are more likely to reenter foster placement than are those discharged to adoptive placements (Rzepnicki, 1987). Regarding the issue of "drift, one study found that a majority of foster children studied in a "large national sample experienced a low number of placements, suggesting they had a stable relationship with their foster parents" (Pardeck, 1984). A study of children placed in Pennsylvania between 1978 and 1979 found that "The majority of children who enter foster care return to their families within a relatively short time." The researchers added “Our findings also bear out those of others that the foster care experience is a relatively stable one for children with the majority having one or two placements while in care” (Lawder et al., 1986).

It is questionable whether foster care in itself is harmful to children. Trudy Festinger’s study of the outcomes of foster care for emancipated young adults found that “most are functioning in society in about the same way as others their age.” Festinger’s results moved her to ask question why so many “dire predictions” are made for children in foster care (1983).

In a recent review of research, Barth and Berry found that children who are returned to their own homes are more at risk than those who are placed in adoptive homes or with foster families (1987). The authors noted that abused children who remain in their own homes and whose families receive services are five times more likely to be reabused than children placed with foster families. They concluded that “Of all placement options, in-home services or reunification with birth families, as
it presently operates, fails most often to free from abuse and to yield developmental well-being” (Barth and Berry, 1987).

To perhaps oversimplify the thrusts of these two federal policies: the first sought to protect children from child abuse; the second to protect them from foster care. Why have few policy makers recognized that children in foster care and children from abusing homes are often one and the same? Children who are at risk for abuse may need temporary and even permanent respite from their biological families. In the absence of national child care, homemaker services and the full complement of other services that would allow us to claim a real national family policy, foster care is likely to be a very viable solution for many of these children. Child welfare professionals must be able to call on a wide range of resources to effectively accomplish their mandate to protect children. If a substantial amount of critical services are not to be made available to families, foster care takes on added significance in the effort to protect children. Barth and Berry argue that a longer service period of 2 to 3 years is necessary to protect children returned to their families, notwithstanding the family’s right to privacy. Based on their review of research, the authors conclude that “Foster care, the recent whipping boy of child welfare services, appears to offer considerable developmental advantages to children and is often regarded favorably and as sufficiently permanent by them” (1987).

Conclusion

The best interests of children are not served by the confluence of these two policies. Reporting and regulations cannot by themselves provide the necessary help to children in danger of abuse or neglect. Instead substantial services to troubled families, including child care, homemaker services, widely available health care and foster care services should accompany a commitment to professional intervention in the form of casework services. Equally as important to the well-being of children is a domestic policy that would promote work and economic equality. With clear evidence that the despair of poverty is a serious contributing factor to the abuse and neglect of children, it is unlikely that either of these two policies by themselves can do more than transform personal tragedy into bureaucratic disorder.
Along with the growing public commitment to protect children, the belief in the importance of the family as the primary source of children's well being has remained an important theme in child welfare policy, indeed in American values generally. Child welfare professionals are suffering from the same conflicting mandates today that emerged in the Progressive Era: protect children by protecting the integrity of the family, and protect children from parental abuse. Under current conditions these goals may be too often mutually exclusive.

References


A Critique of Family Case Workers 1900–1930:
Women Working With Women

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Case records from a charity organization/family case work agency in the early century provide means for evaluating the interaction of nascent social workers with female heads of poor households receiving relief 1900–1930. Class differences and social control appear in retrospect as defining certain elements of this activity; although social workers provided needed material resources, positive impact on poor women’s lives was limited by workers’ lack of knowledge and unquestioning commitment to traditional values. Casework, however, is shown as a complex process with concerned leaders in social work trying to shape professional behavior and recipient families engaged in their own problem solving processes.

Early twentieth century urban America appears in photographs as newly built factory smokestacks and crowded tenements—“home” for the families of poorly paid workers. Behind this was an ironic pattern of social relations wherein certain industrial capitalists created misery for the working class in the name of progress—and profit—while asserting civic responsibility by sitting on the boards of charities constituted to remedy the blight of poverty. Some historians have concluded, therefore, that social control was the driving intent of social welfare organizations. Rather than primarily acting out of humanitarian concern or compassion, those with economic authority are judged to have used relief to dilute expression of class conflict and to pressure adoption of middle class manners1 (Gettleman, 1963, pp. 325–327, 417–421; Jones, 1979, pp. 75, 76; Kogut, 1970,

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While this interpretation rightly draws attention to the interests of elite male power in interlocking board rooms, the scholarship too often stops short of examining how ideology translated into actual organizational activity and the degree to which it was successful. To accomplish this includes asking: Who were the persons engaged with the poor on a daily basis and what did they do? How receptive was the lower class to either help or "control" at the hands of others? Answering these questions reveals charity work in poor neighborhoods as an uneven and complex interaction primarily among women. It was activity characterized by both haphazard and controlling approaches to problem solving which reflected class difference and ignorance, but also activity whereby recipients set some limits.

At charity organization societies (COS) and most other social service agencies in the early century, front-line employees were females who were expected to carry out the mission of the sanctioning boards while identifying themselves with the developing social work profession (Becker, 1963, pp. 255–261; Chambers, 1986, pp. 1, 6–8, 21; Rauch, 1975, pp. 241–259). The needy families they met frequently lived in households that today would be defined as part of the "feminization of poverty". Women with children and old women alone came within agencies' purview, but two parent households were represented as well in which a man's presence carried no economic guarantee. Here a wife was more than an equal partner in the scramble for economic survival and it was she who was left to negotiate with sources of formal relief. Thus, contact on front porches and at kitchen tables between middle class nascent professionals and lower class, often desperate, women characterized much of urban charity activity (Berg, 1978, pp. 156, 170, 199, 222, 267; Rauch, 1975, p. 256). Eventually this would come to be defined as the meeting of a social worker and a client in the process of family case work.

Understanding the process of this interaction and the constraints on activity of both female parties is essential to a thorough evaluation of the COS as an urban institution, of the roots
A Critique of Family Case Workers 1900–1930

of the social casework profession, and of the recipient experience of the urban poor.

Research is based on the Minneapolis COS established in 1884 as Associated Charities, whose records are located today in the Social Welfare History Archives at the University of Minnesota. This collection includes over 30,000 individual family case records written or dictated by social workers in repeated encounters with the poor over half a century. A sample of 300 cases opened between 1900–1930 was selected for use here, each included a face sheet for demographic information and pages of text—usually with great detail describing an applicant’s material situation, family history, and experience in the city and with the agency. Bits of dialogue were included within quotation marks. Clients and kin sent notes which became attached to their records along with medical and school reports and pertinent news clippings. While case records reveal the interaction between paid workers and the poor, administrative reports and early professional literature enable comparison between what did occur and the “experts” assumptions at the time about what should take place.

Associated Charities (AC) was chartered with the vision of centralizing relief applications city wide and coordinating—with great discretion—all responses to them. By the early 1900s however, AC like other COS in the century, veered from this mission and emphasized organization in other directions. By 1922 the state had established a public employment bureau, and legal aid and nursing both had become independent programs; the total emphasis on “family work” was therefore formally acknowledged with a name change to Family Welfare Association (FWA) revised later to Minneapolis Family and Children’s Service, an agency still in full operation today.
The shift to family work was reflected in the title of the national organ that linked similar local agencies across the country. The American Association of Societies for Organizing Charity became the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work and finally the Family Welfare Association of America. The nature of family case work interactions at AC/FWA in Minneapolis resembled that in similar private social welfare agencies elsewhere during the early decades of the century.

The Challenge Of Developing Professional Intervention

Female benevolent societies flourishing in antebellum America took on the task of visiting the poor at home (Ambramovitz, 1988, p. 151; Gratton, 1985, p. 5; Rosenberg, 1971, pp. 189–193, 207). Later city COS organized "friendly visiting" as a fundamental strategy to determine if the needy should be found eligible for aid and as means to inspire and uplift them. Agencies often provided guidelines for this contact between classes and in 1899 Mary Richmond, later the author of case work publications for the Russell Sage Foundation, compiled *Friendly Visiting Among the Poor* as a handbook. The act of visiting by middle and upper class ladies was to include the "intimate and continuous knowledge and sympathy with a poor family's joys, sorrows, opinions, feelings, and entire outlook upon life" (Richmond, 1899, p. 180). Theoretically the family that had such regard from an outsider would develop the ability to rise above the negatives in its own situation. Over time, however, neither the corps of volunteers, the relationships, nor the change in character had been achieved in many places.

By the early twentieth century ladies in the Friendly Visiting Conference at the Minneapolis AC had reorganized as the Relief and Service Committee concentrating their efforts on studying civic issues, discussing the problems of particular case families, and raising funds. This money, in addition to funds from the agency's general budget, was allocated to households for emergency relief or periodic pensions. The paid staff—originally called "agents" and later "social workers"—handled the distribution⁸ (Becker, 1964, pp. 57–72; Lloyd, 1971, pp. 80, 81, 138; Lubove, 1965, pp. 10–19). They hoped that short term financial assistance would not simply relieve immediate
want, but would help a family find its way to permanent self-sufficiency. Giving out money, however, was not to be the heart of an agent's work.

When Associated Charities celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1909 past accomplishments were highlighted but the intent of festivities was to look to the future. As keynote speaker, Julia Lathrop from Chicago's Hull House emphasized the important development of "professionalism" with the use of paid—not volunteer—staff relying on a body of knowledge that took human difference into account (Associated Charities, 1909, pp. 36-40; Survey, 1910, pp. 762-764). Lathrop was advocating changes already taking place in many agencies, but as Associated Charities moved into its second twenty-five years, developing a professional approach to work became an agency priority. With paid staff this COS and others had to define an intervention in people's lives that was distinguishable from the untutored help of friends or neighbors and from efforts of other professionals—for example, those in medicine or law. For years the visiting nurse corps at AC had been providing basic health care to the poor in their homes and giving advice about nutrition and hygiene, but agents were to have greater goals than good health. Their broad intervention in family life was judged successful if it resulted in economic self-sufficiency. Efforts to this end also had to have a definable technique and objective enough impact to justify training agents and paying them wages (Associated Charities, 1911, pp. 14, 15; 1913, pp. 13, 24, 28, 31, 43; Leighninger, 1987, pp. 27-32; McKnight, 1917, p. 38).

When Frank J. Bruno came in 1914 to direct the Minneapolis COS after years of charity work in New York City, he took charge of this accelerating movement toward professionalism. Soon after arriving he sent a series of letters to his old friend Mary Richmond asking advice and expressing his concern that staff develop as a group both "autonomous" and "accountable." To better advance these goals, Bruno spurred the Department of Sociology at the University of Minnesota to develop a training program for social workers where he himself taught for a time. Until he left in 1925 to head a new social work program, which became the George Warren Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis, his director's reports to the Board cautioned
that agents were underpaid and overworked, a condition that led to high turnover, not good case work\(^\text{10}\) (Associated Charities, 1910, p. 12; Becker, 1963, p. 256).

The fact of low pay and large caseloads is not a surprising revelation; less known is the concern among social work leaders at that time about the quality of case work and their search for means to improve it. When Mary Richmond's text, *Social Diagnosis*, was published in 1917, Bruno among others saw it as a turning point (Bruno, 1928, p. 203; Bruno, 1957, p. 186; Chambers, 1963, pp. 97, 98; Salsberry, 1927, pp. 153–157; Vandiver, 1980, p. 29). It provided an explicit framework for investigation of families within a broad social context that included attention to a family’s economic resources, ethnicity and culture, kin, neighbors, employers, physicians, and any others who might be aware of their situation and act as resources. This conceptual understanding placed individuals within an environmental context and at the Minneapolis Associated Charities a dog-eared copy of the book was passed among staff. Supervisors made marginal comments on case records, “What does Mary Richmond say?” and “check Soc. Diag.

In looking at this book today, it is clear that Richmond emphasized data collection and assessment almost to the exclusion of planned intervention. A comparision of the Minneapolis case records opened between 1900–1910 with those of 1920–1930 shows that families in the latter period were somewhat less likely to receive needed material relief and practical services while the agency was more likely to interview secondary sources to gain understanding of a family’s plight\(^\text{11}\). Although professional literature in the 1920s was already moving beyond the environmental focus to psychological insight as the key to understanding human behavior, that was not yet an approach implemented by agents responsible for case work in poor neighborhoods (Field, 1980; Leighninger, 1987, pp. 16, 17). Thus, social work students in internships from the University learned part of their “craft” by going to City Hall to “verify” the births, deaths, marriages and mortgages of case families. The result was an amassing of objective information and interviews in the records whose practical use was unclear (Strode and Strode, 1940, pp. 25–28, 30–39).
In 1920 the Minneapolis Council of Social Agencies with leadership from Bruno enlisted AC social workers and those from other organizations—Red Cross, Big Brothers, Children's Protective Society, County and University Hospitals—to undertake a self-study of family case work in the city. One purpose was to uncover duplication of effort among agencies, but Bruno also hoped to evaluate his staff's understanding of family intervention. When the surveys were analyzed, he was disturbed. His agency had steadfastly attempted to provide educated supervisors, to require ongoing training, and encourage agents to read from the growing body of literature. (By 1922, family case work had developed its own journal titled The Family, forerunner to Social Casework.) Yet it appeared to him that staff lacked an understanding of the difference between providing service and creating a plan for action. This struggle to improve case work continued with his successor, Joanna C. Colcord, who also came to Minneapolis after experience at the New York City COS. She took up the same challenge of establishing professionalism and wrote optimistically in 1926 that the quality of work at AC/FWA contained "more thought and less motion" than in the past (FWA, 1926, pp. 18–20).

Sophonisba Breckinridge, shaping the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration during these years, wrote that social work education could not develop far without textbooks that included actual case records showing family dynamics and agent intervention. But this goal was difficult to achieve, she said, because records had to be disguised for confidentiality in a way that did not reduce content. More serious, however, was the fact that "good" case work was very hard to find in the agency records she had seen (Breckinridge, 1924, pp. vii–x, 42). Others teaching and writing in the field also criticized social work case records as "hodge-podge" collections of facts and impressions, a stream of consciousness on the part of both workers and family members with moral judgments scattered throughout (Bruno, 1957, pp. 184–189; Mowrer, 1927, pp. 60–62, 177–187, 241; Rich 1931, pp. 98, 105; Richmond, 1922, p. 28). One critic within social work at the time described workers and all the information they gathered into records as "overladen ships" on "uncharted seas" (Wallerstein, 1920, pp. 17, 18).
By the 1920s educated women and men across the nation were attempting to give direction for establishing a purposeful social welfare work force. Clarity was growing about the range of variables in dealing with people, but some experts in the field also realized that much of the family work was being done haphazardly. The profession was developing an approach to work, but at different tempos at different levels within the proliferating private agencies (Chambers, 1963, pp. 87-106; Leighninger, 1987, pp. 8-21).

What Actions Followed the Knock on The Door?

Serious family work began with an initial home visit and the first page of almost every case record included a vivid description of this meeting. Not every family lived in impoverished circumstances but when agents first knocked on a door and then looked in or were let in, they often perceived want without the need for extended conversation. In responding to the malnutrition, ill health, inadequate housing and clothing that often were apparent, a worker from AC/FWA could make available small amounts of cash relief, coal or grocery orders. Case records show that arranging in-kind aid was a primary role of staff at the agency and usually this material relief was accompanied by what social workers today would call “Information and Referral.” Such services are illustrated here in a particular case included in the 1920 self-study that Bruno directed.

For each family record selected as part of this evaluation, the designated social worker had to answer a set of questions explaining her actions. The first of these read, “What were the problems you discovered in investigation?” Existing drafts of the study questionnaires show that workers wrote in, crossed out, and reorganized what they wanted to say about their efforts. The list below was the end result of editing on a description of initial problems in an immigrant household:

1. Mr. L. in City Hospital with pleurisy and possibly TB.
2. Anna, 17, only support of the family.
3. Mr. L. drank.
4. "Joe," a boarder, and a cripple, was supported.
5. Mr. L’s relatives thought themselves “above” the L’s and did nothing to help them.
6. Anna and her father did not get along. Anna had previously left home because he drank and beat her, stayed out late at nights.
7. Mrs. L. had rheumatism.
8. Stephan dull mentally.
9. Mrs. L. still nursing year old baby.
10. Mrs. L. spoke little English.
11. Mr. L. spoke little English.
12. Anna out late at night, lived away from home at times. (This entire phrase had a line through it; marks on the work sheet suggest #6 was the preferred statement of the problem.)
13. Bad Housing.
14. Children exposed to TB.

In answer to this situation AC/FWA eventually gave the family a total of $157.10 in direct cash relief, but much of the social worker’s activity was directed at consulting and involving 38 other persons and organizations in the case. The County Poor Relief sent “Joe”, the boarder (who also appeared to be a relative), to the County Poor Farm. The clothing project run by the public school system furnished garments for the children; the infant Welfare Society “taught” Mrs. L. (the mother of 7 other children) how to wean the baby. The City Health Department registered Mr. L. at the metropolitan tuberculosis sanitarium; Big Sisters placed Anna in a private home; teachers at another school pledged to show “special interest” in one of the younger children, and a neighborhood grocer agreed to take a second mortgage on a lot and shed the couple owned. The worker decided on and accomplished certain referrals, but she carried the case further.

After some time the agent came to believe that the “wisest thing to do would be to sell the lot and lumber” and use the proceeds as income to cover family expenditures. Mr. L. had left the sanitarium with the onset of other physical and mental problems and refused to return; he was too ill to work but would not agree to selling the property. His drinking was reported as being over; however, no impetus for this abstention was mentioned nor was it recorded that his brutality ended as
well. The family had found its own solution to the problem of income; Mr. L. stayed home providing child care while Mrs. L. went out to work. Anna received “general supervision,” including encouragement for employment and for reading “good books” as opposed to “dime novels.” And the relationship with her father was judged to be “somewhat more friendly.” At the time the case record was studied, the worker still hoped Mr. L. would get well enough to hold a job so that Mrs. L. could stay home. Poor health and the absence of English continued as obstacles.

The list of family problems that the social worker initially cited mixed value judgements and objective observations. There was little sense that some concerns held priority for intervention or that issues were interrelated. What were the causes and consequences of the poor health? What was the role of ethnicity in kin relations, in child rearing? Was Mrs. L. vulnerable to the same brutality that Anna suffered? And who in the family and strengths on which to build? Some difficulties were largely beyond the direct intervention of a single worker— for example Mr. L.’s deteriorating health. Other problems were almost ignored—his drinking and violence. No simple solutions existed and the L. family could challenge case workers at a contemporary county social service. As the case stands here it suggests what Bruno feared as workers providing service without a plan for action and what Colcord called “motion.” The activity is notable, however for it shows how a family case worker made numerous contacts and moved assertively to find resources in a city wide network.

A social worker from AC/FWA was accustomed to taking the street car and traveling through poor areas—not just to visit cases but to locate landlords to forestall evictions or postpone a demand for rent. Agents hunted for what they believed would be better family housing and they talked with employers about providing jobs or advancing a paycheck for a particularly “worthy” household. They solicited relief funds from wealthy women and men on the agency Board and sought donations from others around the city (Chambers, 1986, pp. 10, 21). At times of crisis a worker could be the person to “rescue” a family,
arriving at the door with groceries the day the cupboard went bare or bringing a coal order when the temperature dipped.

Such arrangements by staff had another impact as well. As these social workers developed individual proficiencies in seeking and successfully negotiating resources from throughout the city, many accompanied assistance and referral with license to recommend and criticize family behavior. In this way they sought "control." Questions put to the neighborhood grocer might reveal a family's ill-advised use of credit or lack of frugality in purchasing habits and armed with such information a social worker could demand reform. Neighbors would be asked about liquor bottles in the garbage can or union suits on the clothesline. With the strength of the agency's reputation behind them and growing confidence in their own professional status, unmarried middle class social workers appear to have had few qualms about telling wives and mothers what constituted proper homemaking, child rearing, and family relations. When the giving of such advice led to debate (dutifully recorded in the records), social workers would on occasion threaten court procedures—although this was rarely executed. Mary Richmond recognized this phenomenon and cautioned the profession not to confuse an agent's "acts of seeming selflessness" in working for a family with "an autocratic role in center stage" of family life (Richmond, 1922, p. 171; Lubove, 1965, p. 23).

Constraints on What Social Workers Knew To Do

Records show the high number of cases assigned to each agency worker; figures through 1913 vary from a low ration of one worker for 81 families to a high of 1:225 families. As a result of this responsibility, time given each case was uneven. Whether any one particular family felt agency attention to be a helpful needed resource or unwanted control, an agent did not even have the personal resources to impose either benevolence or judgement on all the households she knew (Associated Charities, 1910, p. 31; 1911, p. 16). Thus, the records show that social workers dealing with multi-problem households often did what was most easily accomplished. Getting clothes for a child in rags was a much simpler task than getting the mother to
agree to follow through on a doctor’s appointment at a hospital. Clothing, food, and fuel answered needs on which the two women could agree. They would easily disagree, however, as to whether a relative was lazy and should be asked to move out or whether the family should uproot and leave a neighborhood with a “bad” reputation.

In a 1910 case a new widow's own plans for self-sufficiency included renting household rooms to male boarders. The agent heard from neighbors that these men had been seen sitting in the kitchen drinking, with the widow joining them at times. When questioned she denied the allegation and refused to turn them out. The agent's response some months later was to give no more coal as long as these men would receive part of the heat, but clothes would still be sent to the children. Disagreement might be raised forcefully by a worker for a time, but most often the records indicate the controversial issue dropped from sight in the case record without further action. Poor women could refuse to follow a worker’s suggestion and “win” over time.

Colcord wrote that when staff were overworked with high caseloads, she could see by the ledger that cash relief rather than case work became workers’ preferred strategy. And the female director who followed her made a similar assessment suspecting that many cases were being closed quickly after opening simply because workers were too busy to undertake much action (FWA, 1926, pp. 18-20; Salsberry, 1920, p. 4). Therefore regardless of intent, time constrained a worker’s functioning with a family. Agents, however, acted under constraints which were less apparent than those of time and large caseloads; knowledge base and values limited the quality of help they were prepared to give families in need.

In retrospect it is clear that these women—as other professionals then and even now in certain settings—lacked scientifically based information about human behavior. For example, they knew little about physical or mental disability although they used many labels such as “mentally queer,” “half wit,” “imbecile.” In this study a limited number of adults and children were placed in state institutions by court intervention, but placement was usually presented as a fact in the records with very little reference to the behavior observed and judged.
Culture and ethnicity were given slight attention and a third of the time workers neglected to indicate nationality on the face sheet. Agents might urge that an immigrant enroll in settlement house English classes but records do not simultaneously reveal an attempt to understand how ethnic culture shaped behavior. The one short-lived exception to this neglect was the agency’s employment of a “Slavik worker” in 1913. Such immigrants were a small minority compared with Scandinavians and Germans who make up at least a quarter of the case load, but the annual report explained that these Eastern Europeans did not understand America, nor did America understand them. Within a few years, however, the person was dropped from the staff roster without comment (Associated Charities, 1910, p. 32; 1913, p. 11).

Across lines of ethnicity, more than a fifth of all families in this study coped with the drunkenness of male members, but with this problem also agents appeared to understand little. Women complained vigorously that husbands drank too much and neighbors corroborated reports that men staggered home from taverns to abuse their wives and hungry children (See also Gordon, 1988, p. 143). For some time of these men arrest and a sentence in the workhouse followed public fighting or disturbing the peace. This was a problem police dealt with, however; few female social workers had actual contact with these men and initially were falsely relieved when Prohibition seemed to promise solution to the problems of drink. After 1918 the police made fewer arrests for drunkenness and the state closed an inebriate hospital but some wives said that drinking moonshine made their husbands act worse than legal liquor ever had (Rosheim, 1978, p. 123). When the records do show agents intervening, it was to recommend a “good strong lecture” as remedy. Social workers would seek out a brother, employer, priest, or policeman to persuade—or scare—a habitual drinker into sobriety. For this serious family problem, social workers offered little else.

Other vital issues related to family well-being occurred with scant acknowledgement. Social workers often wrote sympathetically about a cluster of pitiful looking children huddled around a mother’s skirt, and over time they would add birth dates to
the record's face sheet, but contraception was discussed only if the woman in the house expressed her own desperate concern. Some mothers were apologetic for pregnancy, vowing that they had been "careful." Others would say simply that they wanted no more children. such comments were written into the record but usually without report of what had been the worker's response. Occasionally a dialogue was repeated wherein a woman directly asked how to prevent pregnancy, and the best a worker could do—according to the records—was to advise her to see a public health nurse or doctor. One particular case was unusual in that the worker became more involved.

In 1927, Mrs. M., the pregnant mother of four, began a series of conversations about birth control with her agent. She was resigned to the forthcoming birth—although she had experienced miscarriages and the doctor had told her she was working "too hard." Babies "had been coming every year," and "she knew she would never want to have more children although she was only 31 she thought she had enough to take to care of." After the birth of the fifth child, the agent sent her—to no avail—to a public health nurse to ask about sterilization. The nurse, in turn, referred her to doctors and the woman reported, "Has asked doctors but they refused to tell her any preventive measures and would not sterilize her." The record went on:

She said if she had another child she wanted to die as she knew she would go crazy. She was almost crazy from those she had as has had such a terrible time with each one. Mr. M. always resented each child as it was born altho he liked his children afterward. He was cruel to her when he could not have intercourse & she would not permit it while she was pregnant. He hounded her to death. She could not do anything with him when he got this way. . . . She used contraceptive measures such as some kind of suppository when she could afford to buy them and a douche. She thought the 2 together would be more preventive, but had found out when she became preg with last child, that they were not.

The agent "promised to do what she could" and within a month told the mother that a "vocat test" might be sched-
uled. "On the basis of the results of this test something might be arranged whereby she would never have to have any more children, she said she certainly would do this . . . She would be willing to go any time . . ." It appeared that the worker thought low scores could justify sterilization on the basis of "feeblemindedness" or perhaps insanity. Discussion in the record about this matter ends here—for whatever reason; seemingly no test—and clearly no sterilization—took place. Through the next years new agents took up the case and this mother had two more live births in addition to miscarriages and abortions. It is unclear whether that scheme to control contraception was one female agent's independent and inventive response to another woman, or if it was unwritten policy that certain social workers implemented to skirt legal prohibitions and social criticism. It was obviously controversial for on the front page of the record the following unusual note was written in bold letters, "NO ONE TO READ THIS RECORD WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY." Not until 1931 did the chairwoman of the Relief and Service Committee suggest to the larger Board that it was time to take a stand on the matter of "b.c." in spite of the fact that some Board members had concerns about association with the concept of "Voluntary Parenthood"¹⁵ (Gordon, 1976, p. 256). For years the role social workers' played was to encourage prenatal care and hunt for layettes. They, as many of the women visited, were resigned to the inevitability of conception and birth.

The middle class backgrounds of individual agents as well as attitudes within the social work profession itself contributed to ignorance of and a sense of propriety about domestic sexual relations. Social workers felt free to record a poor woman's lament over "unreasonable" sexual demand and to include confirmations from her female relatives that the husband was a "brute." In these records, however, social workers rarely defined what constituted "unreasonable" sexual expectation, what had been their own line of inquiry, and more importantly, their own response to women in such situations. Although social workers' own professional lives included an assertive independence that ran counter to normative expectations for female behavior at this time, they worker within an institution that held to a
traditional ideal for family life. A nuclear family was to be self supporting through the honest work effort of the man, and it was to be harmonious and healthy through efforts of the mother at home caring for both husband and children (Abramovitz, 1988, pp. 36–40; FWA, 1926, p. 26; Richmond, 1930, p. 178). The reality that agents encountered, however, frequently departed from these norms. Too much drinking made some men a physical threat to their families and the absence of effective contraception kept families expanding regardless of women’s wishes and financial resources. Even in households where domestic relations were not at odds, unemployment and ill health interrupted expectations for economic support. Men abandoned their families, and women and children walked the streets hoping to find work.

At professional meetings throughout the country social workers and reformers debated the proper response to desertion and the problems of child labor; there was little said, however, about the issue of women’s physical abuse (Gordon, 1988, pp. 253–267; Pleck, 1983). A sixth of the women in this study, particularly those who complained about a husband’s drinking, talked also of being afraid. This fear would often be expressed in the records as part of a discussion as to how a husband had “changed.” There were many variations of the following report: “She says he is cruel to her now.” Some men, described usually with the adjective “crazy,” kept a gun under the bed or in the shed and had terrorized wives, children, and sometimes neighbors. Social workers reported these stories, but as with comments about sex, they rarely acknowledged in writing what—if any—had been their reaction to such violence. This reluctance stands in great contrast to quickness in recording comments or dialogues with women over proper housekeeping standards and appropriate menus. In a sixth of the households a husband’s failure to provide financial support was an ongoing issue written into the record, with the court room always held out as a possible course for corrective action. Workers more than wives were frequently in favor of pressing non-support charges, but a man’s cruelty did not elicit similar quick insistence on action. Social workers reported no arguments with wives as to whether such men should be turned over to the law. They did not check
back diligently to find out if the husband was still brutal as they did to monitor what became of this weekly pay check.

In partial explanation for this silence it is important to note that some of these perpetrators were discussed in the past tense; they had abandoned their homes (although desertion rarely was permanent) and women were simply remembering the misery of what had been with mixed feelings about the value of such men’s return. Even the husbands living at home were rarely around for confrontation when agents visited. These female social workers did not register regret about the lack of opportunity to face men and they might well have been wary of opposing males who had bad reputations and might not take kindly to lectures. On the few occasions that records reported what now would be termed “marriage counseling” with both spouses present, social workers recommended patience and mutual pledges of kindness (Gordon, 1988, pp. 280–285). The female agents—who were quick to hold males accountable in traditional roles as economic supporters—accepted the tradition of patriarchy wherein women were subject to physical and sexual abuse. These same women often were exploited in the work place and here too, social workers indirectly participated.

Simply because men should work, or a man was in the household, did not mean that a wife and mother could escape the need for wage work to bring home income. Agents sometimes encouraged wives not to find jobs because their husbands might grow indolent and neglected children would suffer. Women alone, however, were assisted in taking up provider roles if no other options for self-sufficiency existed. In 39 of the 300 households agents gave direction in finding work or forcefully encouraged women to move into wage labor. In a home visit that was not atypical, the worker lectured and cajoled a young, newly deserted and despairing mother “to get up & dress & go to PH [Pillsbury Settlement House with both an employment bureau and day nursery] so she might “get work for tomorrow.”

Job opportunities for either sex in the lower class were characterized by hard work, irregularity, and scant pay. Three fourths of the 300 in these cases were recorded as working intermittently and social researchers at the time observed, “if there
are few good servants, there is always an army of charwomen available." A sixth spoke of cleaning business buildings at night; a larger group cleaned in private homes and taxed their backs leaning over laundry tubs. In 1918 local ladies' clubs worked with the Minnesota State Department of Labor to survey the wage work of over 50,000 women in Minneapolis. Findings showed one half were mothers and one third were earning less than the $10 a week considered "below minimum subsistence"; the next one third were earning at "minimum subsistence." The menial labor providing these wages, however, was the same activity that agents perceived as "opportunities" to be found for clients.

Social workers informed ladies on agency committees about honest and hard working charwomen whose labor was available at the going meager rate. Occasionally agents themselves hired a female client to do their laundry. In 1917 a worker recorded a conversation with a young widow who was receiving her monthly rent money from the Relief Service Committed. She was doing laundry for two of its members known to be "so much interested in her" situation. The widow, however, felt she was being underpaid and expressed the belief "she is worth $2.00 now with everything as high as it is," (rather than the $1.60 a day she had been receiving). A note a few days later reported her price for laundry had risen as warned. But such cases were rare, most women were desperate to find a regular place of employment and often squandered their own health working for lowest wages.17 (Brady, 1948, pp. 171-175; Cadberry, et al., 1907, p. 110; Monthly Labor Review, 1920, pp. 543-547).

Over decades this COS/family case work agency in Minneapolis could measure rate and incidence of local unemployment by the volume of requests for help. During its first years much of the office activity centered around the employment bureau, and calls for jobs tied up the phone lines. When the region experienced its periodic recessions, the executive director participated with other community leaders in committees focused on unemployment, allocations of city funded jobs such as shoveling snow and raking leaves, and the possibility of job creation. Yet case records in the agency demonstrate that social workers talked to individual family members as if an earnest search for
work would doubtlessly prove fruitful, and that once a job had been procured, it would deliver means for self-sufficiency and thereby end the need for agency assistance.

Agents were willing to criticize others’ life styles and values and made quick judgments about what would be best for the families they met; they were unreflective, however, of the values guiding their own judgments. Social workers accepted the exigencies brought on by industrial capitalism and supported traditional definitions of family relations in spite of painful contradictions they knew through experiences in the field. They often were able, however, to provide short term material relief and establish interagency links as shown in the example from the 1920 self-study. Social workers could and did arrange for children to spend a week at summer camp or pay for false teeth needed by a woman ashamed to leave her home. They helped immigrants take out citizenship papers and found lumber and volunteers to repair dangerously sagging back steps. Short term tangible material needs were responded to, and for many families this was all they sought from the strangers at the private agency.

Families’ Interaction With Social Workers

Family case work involved two parties—each of whom had questions about the other and an agenda of concern. In a particular record one woman’s logical question “why do you come?” continues as “why do you come to bother me again? How many more are there at the FWA office that can call...?” This was repeated twice as a wife confronted a social worker coming up the walk. Her anger arose from her belief that the agency had bumbled efforts to locate her deserted husband. As she perceived the current state of affairs, “no good”—only “grief”—had come from agency involvement. The worker’s inquiries in the neighborhood had led to “all” of the woman’s friends hearing rumors of her troubles and she refused any more discussions with anyone from AC/FWA. Just as agency directors could be both hopeful and disappointed with the quality of case work, women like this one had expectations which went amiss.

The majority of families, however, that became known at AC/FWA had initially expected nothing. Among the 300 house-
holds in this study, two-thirds first came to agency attention through referral. It was a neighbor, relative, visiting nurse or teacher who assumed that the agency could and would do something to help. They called AC/FWA or sent notes and the need in such instances was routinely written up as "investigation and aid." When a woman—or more seldomly a man—first came in on their own, the request was not for broadly based intervention but most usually for something specific: a job (even after the employment bureau was officially closed), a loan to rent a dray for moving, underwear for school children or a layette for another one expected. As this request was followed up by the home visit and further questions, the agent assumed a more general mission—"the knowledge and sympathy of family life" that Mary Richmond had first spoken about combined with concern about proper living and economic self-sufficiency. These goals almost always meant that a family got more than it asked for—both positively and negatively.

As agents attempted to be thorough in the investigative approach of Social Diagnosis, they encouraged women to expand on the details of what had happened in the past. This also meant that for homemakers who were ill, lonely or frustrated, a social worker could play a role of a welcome therapeutic listener. In acts of reciprocity women gave agents flowers from gardens and jars of preserves. Occasionally cordial notes added to case records showed social workers and recipients exchanging warm greetings about children and past experiences years after a case had officially closed. The following letter was sent by one deserted mother who with her children left the city temporarily to visit kin in the country:

Dear Miss Hamilton,

Awfully sorry that we haven't written sooner but we have been so busy you know how it is when you haven't seen anyone for a long time. There is so much to say to one another.

We found everyone well here. . . .

I will be back the first part of July and put in for a divorce as its no use to go on any longer. . . . My
brothers have no time for Mr. C. [her husband] as he always told so much that wasn't true... .

Well Miss H. I am all out of news and hope you will answer this letter when you have time.

I am your friend,
(signed—Alice Carrick)

At times contact with an agent was appreciated as a supportive relationship between women. Most poor women, however, used social workers functionally as resources. Once a family became a "case"—however that might first take place—its members quickly came to experience how agents had access to a range of material relief, services and opportunities. Many of these were needed and mothers sent children to AC/FWA with notes asking politely one more time for groceries, a load of coal in the winter, or ice in the summer. Whether the requests were recurring or for one time, they did not mean that a woman wanted or would listen to another's advice or suggestions about budgeting her money, spending time with a male friend, or sending a child to school. And while AC/FWA might perceive a family as its "case," the family did not likewise accept such a proprietary relationship. Regardless of agency intent to give help or devise plans, few families "stood still" to listen to all of what was being proposed. For the sake of survival they were engaged in their own processes of decision making and problem solving, and to do so at times meant ignoring or circumventing what others laid out (Stadum, 1988).

Families moved geographically and changed structurally to cope with deprivation. A bad housing situation would be changed for another to save a few dollars or escape eviction—and sometimes to accommodate changes in family size. The fact of the move would become clear to an agent after it had occurred; the social worker would knock on the door only to find that her "case" had disappeared. More usually it was the husband alone who left—whether by death, divorce, desertion or a job search elsewhere—and mothers became single parents. In turn many women moved in with sisters or sent children to board with
kin in the country where the cost of feeding one more mouth was less.

More than half of the families in this set of 300 cases had relatives in the city and state and one third of the women vigorously resisted giving out their names and addresses in answer to agents' regular requests for their identity. Women also denied or hid involvement by persons who later proved to be helping out. In the following example the social worker did not know assistance was coming from the woman's father-in-law. "While [agent] was there an elderly man came in & without much explanation laid a beef roast and two large loaves of bread before Mrs. T." Though usually poor themselves, there was much evidence that kin shared the resources they had and particularly sisters, mothers and daughters came to the aid of one another with nursing and child care. When an elderly bedridden woman reported that her daughter was coming every day to bathe her and change the bed, the social worker suggested that AC/FWA could pay a bit to hire a woman to help out. "Mrs. R. did not think [this] necessary as her daughter would do anything for her that was needed. Mrs. R. seemed to think there was nothing [agent] could do for her..." Successful arrangements for mutual assistance were almost always designed by clients themselves while social workers sought in vain to standardize assistance from a relative as shared living or a monthly stipend. In dealing with friends and relatives, women consistently sought autonomy from the actions of the agency.

As she eked out survival a woman could earn the label of being "cooperative" and "grateful" or "uncooperative" and "ungrateful." And both kinds of adjectives could be applied to a particular person in the context of a single record. While social workers would continue to offer assistance even the in the midst of disagreement and impatience with the family and suspicion that the truth was not fully known, agents seemed not to realize that women chose to be selective about parts of their lives open for inspection and intervention (Gratton, 1985, p. 5; Katz, 1985, p. 24). There was a rational pattern to both the cooperation and its absence that characterized recipient women's behavior.

Driven by responsibility for children, many women in the records appeared dogged in piecing together bits of income
by keeping a boarder, doing laundry in a private home, and scrubbing office floors. They knew how short a distance wages reached and not unlike social workers they developed proficiency in tapping community resources. Necessity required knowledge as to which churches, societies, agencies and institutions had what kind of assistance available, and while agents could make important contacts for clients, women pursued these on their own as well. Although the lives of these poor women are available to historians because need brought them within the purview of AC/FWA, “dependent” would be an inaccurate adjective to use. Need forced an assertive set of behaviors that were often on the edge of despair but that included an independence that social workers could not control and often could not clearly perceive.

Conclusion

Outsiders' intervention in the details of poor families' lives evolved out of home visits made by middle class do-gooders. During the early twentieth century people with connections to urban power established formal private COS and young women who identified with the developing social work profession became the principle employees responsible for family work. Leaders in the field at the time read the case records generated by these women and criticized the haphazard approach to the ultimate goal of family self-sufficiency that agency and profession shared. A contemporary reading of the same records shows an array of worker activity and inactivity that adds detail to the concept of control as implemented by social services historically.

Many factors helped define the parameters of COS case work. Individual agent's time and energy had limits and their training did not prepare them to understand the precarious living in poor neighborhoods. The profession seeking to supervise them was also amateur in its understanding of human behavior and the social and economic environment.

More importantly, social workers in this study were representatives of a prominent agency and were captive to the assumption that their own views and that of the dominant society were automatically superior. Relations between females char-
acterized family case work but this did not mean that female identification defied the class lines existing between giver and recipient. Social workers had their job to do and contemporary professional concepts of "contract" and "self-determination" acknowledging limits to workers' rights to decide and impose were yet to be developed. In examining the case records, however, it is also clear that workers were only marginally effective in regulating households for the women in these homes selectively and actively resisted intervention as they saw fit. In family case work at private social welfare agencies such as Associated Charities and Family Welfare Association, regardless of the intent—consistent or regular control over the daily lives of clients was rarely possible.

Nascent social workers and the women they met in need both knew how to act assertively but within different sets of constraints; each had separate expectations for what role AC/FWA would play. What agents did best was to create linkages and find short term resources and such practical assistance was usually what people wanted. But many social workers in family case work agencies lacked vision and more critically, they lacked outrage at the pain systematically inflicted by nativism, sexism, and capitalism. The records suggest, however, that the poor never expected that social workers would render social justice. It remains to be seen if the profession holds that expectation for itself.

References


Rosheim, D. L. (1978). The other Minneapolis, or the rise and fall of the gateway, the old Minneapolis skid row. Maquoketa, IA: Andromeda Press.


Endnotes

I owe appreciation to Clarke A. Chambers for the support and suggestions he gave me as I wrote and revised this article over time.

1. In an alternate interpretation Leiby finds those in the COS movement motivated principally by religious ideology and conviction.

2. To examine female dependence and independence in relationships to men and marriage, cases in this study were selected initially to fill set quotas related to categories of marital status: married with man at home, married with man gone due to desertion, institutionalization or other reason, man gone due to divorce or death. Upon reading the records, however, it became clear how volatile marital status was among this needy population. Not only does the concept of female headed household need to be re-examined to take into account roles played by women when men were temporarily absent, unemployed or ill, but the number of such households historically needs to be reconsidered. Among the 300 cases in this study, only 122 maintained the same marital status from beginning to end of the case recording period (40% of all cases were closed within 6 months; 80% were closed within 5 years.)

3. Berg claims the new female middle class in the nineteenth century came to understand feminism by involvement in charities benefitting poor and abused women. Material here, however, supports Rauch's questioning of the degree to which friendly visitors were committed to the "aspirations" of the poor women they met in charity work.

4. When Associated Charities/Family Welfare Association became the Minneapolis Family and Children's Service in 1947, approximately 35,000 existing case records from 1895–1945 were microfilmed. These along with 21 linear feet of administrative records from 1889-1961 comprise the Minneapolis Family and Children's Service Collection, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

5. Quotations from case records used here appear as originally written in the records; to honor confidentiality names and initials have been altered with attention given to maintaining ethnicity.

6. See also Folder-Historical, Box 1, FCS Collection.
7. Minutes, Special Board Meeting, August 30, 1922, Folder 1-23-18 to 12-16-24, Box 5, FCS Collection.

8. In this text "agents," "social worker" and "worker," are used interchangeably. Annual Reports from Associated Charities included membership lists of the Friendly Visiting Committee and amount of funds they raised. Discussions about recipient families and advice to agents appears in Minutes, Friendly Visitors Conference ("Visiting" and "Visitors," "Conference" and "Committee" were used interchangeably). Box 7, FCS Collection.

9. See Folder-Historical, Box 1 FCS Collection.

10. Letters, Frank J. Bruno to Mary Richmond, August 25, 1914, September, 1914, and February 16, 1915, Folder-FWA Historical, Box 2; Frank J. Bruno to A. E. Zonne, June 22, 1920, and Report, April 21, 1920 in General Secretary Reports, Box 7, FCS Collection.

11. The 300 cases were divided evenly between those opened during the periods 1900–10 and 1920–30. As examples of change, 105 of the 150 families from the early period received basic material relief and 32 got help dealing with a landlord; in the latter period 82 and 17 did respectively.

12. Letter, Frank J. Bruno to Francis McLean (staff for American Association for Organizing Family Social Work), December 21, 1920, Folders — 12, 13, Self Survey, Box 8, FCS Collection. Administrative reports and sample surveys about the study are also included.

13. This case is written up on survey forms in Folders — 12, 13, Self Survey, Box 8, FCS Collection.


15. Case 4,285 on Reel 130. Quote on agency from Minutes, Board Meeting, May 20, 1931, Folder 1-20-26 to 12-16-21, FCS Collection.

16. Case 1,165 on Reel 114, FCS Collection.

17. Case 707 on Reel 111, FCS Collection.

18. Case 14,901 on Reel 205, FCS Collection.

19. Case 2,385 on Reel 120, FCS Collection.

20. Cases 3,293 and 3,331 on Reel 125, FCS Collection.

21. Katz paraphrases an analysis from G. S. Jones, (1971), Outcast London, pp. 251, 252. London: Oxford Press, that charitable gifts to the needy imposed obligation and the recipient had to express gratitude and humility to continue receiving them. In this study an agent's impatience or distrust often was recorded but did not inevitable lead to case closure or denial of service.
Although authors are increasingly addressing the specific needs of men and women at work, no theory based comparison of how employment affects their psychosocial well-being has been available. A six dimensional index was developed to explore a social exchange model of the associations among employment, psychosocial well-being, and worker productivity for men and women. Findings based on two samples of 41 (instrument pretest) and 143 (model test) employed and unemployed union workers suggest strong reliability and validity estimates for the index, support for the model, high explanatory power, and different results for men and women. Implications for further research and recommendations for developing employment programs to enhance gender specific social well-being and worker productivity are discussed.

Gender, Employment and Psychosocial Well-being

Social workers are becoming increasingly concerned with the nature of employment for clients. Public welfare programs are being structured to include work opportunities, and the role of and approach to employment in social work settings is being debated by historians, political scientists, and economists (Katz, 1986; Mead, 1986; Lekachman, 1987; Ellwood, 1988). Social work is also expanding into the workplace to help employees solve problems and boost productivity. One of the outstanding qualities of the social work profession is its commitment to respond sensitively to the needs of different client groups. Although the way women interact with and value the work experience is receiving attention (Beechy, 1987; Rosen, 1987), a specific test of theory regarding how women derive social well-being from employment, compared to men, has not been available. A theory...
based comparison is desirable so that social workers may develop knowledge about how to meet the specific employment-oriented needs of both men and women.

This paper reports the results of an exploratory study of the differences between men and women in associations among employment and two key indicators of psychosocial well-being: trusting social contacts and participation in a collective purpose. These characteristics have been positively related to mental health by Jahoda (1982) in research replicated across time and across cultures. Deficits in these areas have also been related to severe mental illness by Hollingshead and Redlich (1958). Trusting social contacts and participation in a collective purpose have also been identified as central elements in determining the productivity of workers (Ouchi, 1981; Peters and Waterman, 1982).

Theories about how employment affects psychosocial well-being suggest approaches to the prevention of problems for the currently employed and strategies to structure employment opportunities for new workers so as to encourage their well-being and increase their ability to escape public dependency. Gender specific findings can suggest how to tailor these approaches to meet the particular needs of men and women. Since this perspective includes indicators which reflect both psychosocial well-being and worker productivity, it is useful for examining the twin goals of achieving social welfare and worker productivity at the same time. By studying worker attitudes related to both of these concerns, social workers can learn how to develop practice partnerships with employers which can benefit current employees as well as the unemployed.

Conceptual Framework

Employment has long been recognized as a key resource to meet the human need for sharing in similar activities with others (Homans, 1950). By definition, an employed person engages in similar production activities with other employees to earn wages and contribute to the efforts of the organization, while an unemployed person would not. All else being equal, then, employed people probably experience more similar experiences with others than do unemployed people.
Homans suggests that these sharing activities lead directly to two additional results: a sense of being equal with others, and developing trusting social contact with them. Increased equality results from doing the same or equivalent thing with others; whereas, all else being equal, an unemployed person would not be able to share in such equalizing activities. Increased trusting social contact is a result of employees in similar activities working together regularly and needing to interact as equals to produce the necessary goods to continue their employment. All else being equal, unemployed people would not have the same chance to develop this kind of trust.

In addition, Homans suggests that trusting social contacts promote the development of social norms. These become formalized as informal rules of social interaction become entrenched. The distinguishing characteristic of formalized norms is that they represent an identity for a group which transcends the tasks which it is performing. Maintaining this identity becomes the purpose of the group, and working together becomes as much a process of participating in a collective purpose to meet the social needs of group members as it is a process of producing a set of goods or services.

Blau (1964, 1977) adds to Homans' basic theory with three propositions from his work regarding power and equality. He suggests that similarity in status is associated with increased likelihood of opportunities for social contact. For example, it would be more likely for two people in an organization to contact each other socially when they are both considered as somewhat equal in having valid input about a manufacturing process than if one was considered an "expert" and the other was simply a functionary perceived as only able to perform a limited task. Also, being employed in the same organization as others leads to having opportunity for social contact. For example, people may meet each other in the parking lot, cafeteria, or hallways, at a company picnic, or at a company credit union. Similarly, like activities for workers can lead directly to specific opportunities for social contact among them. When two workers are packaging machine parts together, it is likely that they will have opportunities for social contact with each other as a result. This social contact may be required by the work being done
together, and social contact outside work may be promoted by such contact while working.

Opportunity for social contact, then, is a key requisite for the development of trusting social contacts. This proposition suggests that the more opportunity people have for social interaction with others, the more likely they will engage in social interaction and develop trusting social contacts.

These characteristics are drawn together into a conceptual framework (Figure 1) that proposes a pattern of influences among them.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

1. Employment
2. Activity with Others
3. Equality with Others
4. Opportunity for social Contact
5. Trusting Social Contact
6. Norm Development
7. Participation in a Collective Purpose (Norm Formalization)

It suggests that in order to enhance both trusting social contacts for employees and their sense of participating in a collective purpose, it is necessary to promote activity with others, a sense of equality, and opportunities for social contact for them. People tend to develop perceptions about activity with others, the degree to which they are equal with others, and how much they trust others through a psychosocial process.
To what extent does this framework capture and account for the crucial processes linking employment and key dimensions of human well-being? Testing the usefulness of the framework faced the challenge of clear definition and operationalization of each component and then the empirical assessment of their combined explanatory power.

**Measurement of Variables**

All variables in this analysis other than employment status were measured by administering a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to a random sample of employed and unemployed individuals. The questionnaire was made-up of six scales which contained four to eight questions each, designed to measure the six concepts or constructs, other than employment, whose relationships are charted above. Employment status was derived from employment records for surveyed individuals. It was necessary to define these seven conceptual areas to provide a guideline for scale development and to clearly define the elements of this research.

The works of Turner (1982), Homans (1950), and Emerson (1976) are helpful in determining the meaning of activity with others. Emerson (1976) defined contact with others as a single, basic unit of analysis for sociological research. This definition focuses on the interaction process as the core of activity with others, defined here as the exchange of some personal, emotional, or monetary resource with another person. Following such leads, our scale items asked about such things as whether respondents' days were full of things to do with other people and whether most of the time they were busy doing things with other people.

There is a generous literature on the meaning of equality. Hawkins (1977) cautions that equality is meaningful only in the context of individual differences. Individual differences can coexist with equal treatment in an environment in which both equal opportunities and generally equal results are guaranteed (Aron, 1969; Hewes, 1959; Van Fossen, 1979). Rawls (1971) saw such an environment as a prerequisite for social justice, noting that only when each person in a society can rise to its highest status level with reasonable effort can there be justice.
The conceptualization of equality used here assumes that economic and social differences will exist in society at any one point in time but that, with reasonable effort, most individuals could change statuses to most other positions in that society. Equality scale items referred to such things as whether the respondents thought they "had just as good a chance as the next person" to "make it to the top" in the kind of work they did and whether or not they thought that it was more important to know somebody important to advance in their work than to have well developed skills.

Blau (1964) postulates that if people are unequal in status, they will be less likely to come in contact with each other. He suggests that being equal does not preclude being different (1977) and labels the combination of these two conditions as heterogeneity. From this background, opportunity for social contact can be defined as the exchange of resources between people who are perceived by the other as equal to themselves. Some of the items developed to measure this concept referred to whether or not respondents felt they had shared "a lot of" time with equals and whether they felt they had recently exchanged resources with others who were equal to them, such as buying each other coffee at work or elsewhere.

Works by Argyle (1969), Blau (1964), Emerson (1976), Gibb (1954), Homans (1950, 1961), Turner (1982), Ullman (1967), and Vernon (1965) were reviewed to determine a construct of trusting social contact. They conceptualized it as a set of discrete signals, activity itself, reciprocal communication, social exchange as an integral aspect of group functioning, and an interactional result which is greater than the sum of its parts and evidences itself in expectations of self and others.

A summary definition of trusting social contact reveals an ongoing equal exchange of resources between people in a relationship in which expectations of each person will generally be fulfilled. Items on the scale which measured this variable asked about such concerns as the degree to which respondents could "talk things over" with their friends and "help each other out." As the model suggests, trusting social contacts lead to the development of social norms.
Shaffer (1983) concludes that social norms prescribe rather than describe the influence of one person on another, function in a theoretical orientation of social consensus, regulate behavior by setting latitudes of both acceptable and objectionable behavior, specify regulated behavior through specific guidance, are articulated by verbalized standards, and are enforced through specific rewards or punishments. Additionally, it can be argued from the work of Argyle (1969), Homans (1950), Ullman (1977), and Zaleznick and Moment (1964) that norms are developed through the interaction of individual perceptions and begin with compliance, proceeding to shared identification and internalization by individuals. This internalization yields shared goal attaining patterns of behavior for the group, which are verbalized statements put into action. Questionnaire items which measured this construct asked about the degree to which respondents saw their lives to be very similar to the lives of people they knew and the degree to which they were sure of what others expected from them. The difference between norm development and norm formalization appears to lie in the degree to which people personally identify with social norms in a way that gives them a sense of purpose in working with a group.

Ullman (1977) suggests that coordination rewards contribute to a binding pattern of behavior or formalized norms through regulating and channeling expectations, providing a principle of continuation, and increasing the degree of articulation and explicitness associated with norms (pp. 85-89). In Homans' (1950) terms, these convictions are perceived by group members as "orders" for personal goal achievement and therefore define group purposes for members. He conceptualizes these internalized orders as necessarily changing from time to time. In other words, it becomes part of the group purpose to maintain the group by making internal changes to adjust to those in the environment.

Norm formalization or participation in a collective purpose can be defined as following formalized rules which act to structure a group, and acting to change the nature, rules, and function of a group in order to maintain its cohesion in a changing environment. Some inquiries on the measure for this variable concerned how much guidance respondents received from
friends and how well they have been able to work with others on achieving their goals.

Unlike other variables in the analysis, measuring employment status was straightforward and simple. Employment was operationally defined as being regularly employed for wages for more than 20 hours per week. Based on employment records, half of the respondents for the research were randomly selected from an employed group and half were selected from an unemployed group. Employment status was verified on the survey instrument.

Workers identify personally with organizational goals as a result of the positive feedback from others in joint efforts to achieve them. Participating in a collective purpose begins with the idea of accomplishing some goal. It continues, however, because of the value of the group in providing positive reinforcement. Group members reap the rewards of reinforcement through their role in achieving group goals, maintaining the togetherness of the group, and being seen as positive reinforcers by others. Participation in a collective purpose, then, is an exercise in positive reinforcement for group members, building self-image and self-confidence, and the mental health and personal productivity related to this self esteem. In order to conduct research on how this participation was affected by the other elements of the model, it was necessary to determine if the proposed set of items could consistently and accurately reflect changes in the identified conceptual areas.

Analysis of Validity and Reliability

Having identified operational indicators of each component of the proposed framework, it was then necessary to assess their validity and reliability. A seven member panel of experts in the fields of mental health and organizational behavior reviewed the formulation of various scale items to determine if they reflected the definitional material summarized above. Based on their responses, the items were refined and organized into a self-administered questionnaire. An agree-disagree answer format made it possible to use responses as "dummy" continuous variables which ranged from a low score of 0, representing no
perception of the measured variable, to a high of 1, representing a positive perception.

In order to assess the validity of our scales, the questionnaire was pretested with two groups of respondents in Cleveland, Ohio. Half were unemployed union members who had expressed an interest in a program for developing employment-seeking skills and support but had not followed through. The other half were employed union members on an inactive membership list of The United Labor Agency.

Differential validity criteria required that responses for the unemployed group and the employed group be significantly different at the .05 level on each of the scale measures. Positive interscale correlations of approximately .4 or greater and significant at the .05 level were required to support construct validity. Reliability criteria for the various scales required that an average scale item have a mean between .25 and .75 (midrange between the low score of 0 and the high score of 1 for one scale item). The average scale item standard deviation was required to be greater than .25 (half way between the unacceptable level of 0 and the maximum level of .5). And a Cronbach's alpha score of .6 or greater (preferably .8 or .9) was required for each scale (Nunnally, 1978).

An approximately equal number of responses to the pretest were received from employed and unemployed people: ten men and eleven women who were unemployed and eight men and eleven women who were employed. The average length of their time in the workforce was 24 years.

Cronbach's alpha estimates of reliability for all scales were greater than the required .6 as indicated in Table 1. This table also indicates that criteria limits were met on all scales for acceptable means (.25–.75) and standard deviations (> .25). Scores on all of the scales related to psychosocial well-being and productivity were significantly lower for the unemployed group than for the employed group, thus supporting the differential validity of the set.

Initial tests of construct validity showed that all interscale correlations were significant at the .05 level and that, generally, correlations were at least moderate, usually being greater than .4. These results are reported in Table 2.
Table 1

*Scale Reliability, Central Tendency, and Variance Measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Name</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Estimate</th>
<th>Average Item Mean</th>
<th>Average Item Standard Deviation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity with Others</td>
<td>.91561</td>
<td>.4646675</td>
<td>.692363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality with Others</td>
<td>.81653</td>
<td>.4846538</td>
<td>.5993613</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity for Social Contact</td>
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<td>.4946025</td>
<td>.490625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusting Social Contact</td>
<td>.72811</td>
<td>.492415</td>
<td>.5961525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm Development</td>
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<td>.49917</td>
<td>.4487175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a Collective Purpose</td>
<td>.61127</td>
<td>.5022925</td>
<td>.54605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*Correlation Matrix for Scale Scores with Significance Levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>EQ</th>
<th>OSC</th>
<th>TSC</th>
<th>ND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity with Others (A)</td>
<td>.399*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equality with Others (EQ)</td>
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<td>.451*</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity for Social Contact (OSC)</td>
<td>.478*</td>
<td>.721*</td>
<td>.542*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusting Social Contact (TSC)</td>
<td>.337</td>
<td>.740*</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.618*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm Development (ND)</td>
<td>.261</td>
<td>.472</td>
<td>.358</td>
<td>.536</td>
<td>.495*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a Collective Purpose (Norm Formalization)</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>.548</td>
<td>.556</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>.465*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*=Hypothesized Correlations

ES=Employment Status
Findings

The questionnaire was refined based on the pretest results. It was then administered to a larger sample of respondents. While the goal of the first administration was to test the reliability and validity of the instrument and to hone the number of items to present an efficient set of measures, the goal of the second administration was to test the causal model in Figure 1 to determine if the findings supported it. Because employment status is a factor in the model, both employed and unemployed respondents were surveyed. The initial goal was to determine the effect of this employment status on respondents' psychosocial well-being, both at work and away from it. The different results for men and women grew from this initial exploration.

As noted earlier, each construct or concept in the model was measured through a scale score consisting of four to eight items each. Equal numbers of the questionnaire were once again sent to random samples of employed and unemployed union members in the same geographic region. As in the case of the pretest, respondents of retirement age were excluded from the analysis because of the possible confounding effects of retirement status on determining the effect of employment on the psychosocial variables of interest. After eliminating questionnaires with missing data, and responses from those who were retired, 143 responses were analyzed in the actual test of the model. This sample included 51 employed men with an average work history of 25.7 years, 35 employed women who had been in the work force an average of 22.9 years, 35 unemployed males with an average working history of 24.6 years, and 22 women who were not employed and had generally been working about 22.7 years.

Attention in this analysis is focused on the proposed direct and indirect causal routes hypothesized in Figure 1 using the technique of path analysis. As Holland, Konick, Buffum, Smith, & Petchers (1981) note:

Under circumstances in which independent variables are not directly manipulable by the researcher, ordinary least squares regression provides a useful analytic substitute for experimental controls. The use of OLS regressions within
a path-analytic framework allows the researcher the additional advantage of testing the adequacy and implications of a particular set of theoretically derived causal orderings among variables for which only cross-sectional data are available (Land, 1969). Path analysis results of such analyses are only as good as the theoretical justifications undergirding the model. However, path analysis does allow a proposed conceptual model to be carefully examined for its consistency or "fit" with observations, and it facilitates the process of revising and testing theory (Alwin and Hauser, 1975; Asher, 1976).

Figure 2. Path analysis results for men.

1. Employment (sd=.494)
2. Activity with Others (sd=1.460)
3. Equality with Others (sd=2.748)
4. Opportunity for Social Contact (sd=2.680)
5. Trusting Social Contact (sd=2.748)
6. Norm Development (sd=1.265)
7. Participation in a Collective Purpose (Norm Formalization) (sd=1.245)

As can be seen from the coefficients reported for men in Figure 2, only the proposed path of influence from employment to "activity with others" to "trusting social contact" to "norm development" to "participation in a collective purpose" appears to be supported by our data. For the male subsample, this result would suggest eliminating "equality with others" and "oppor-
tunity for social contact" as relevant in explaining variation in the indicators of interest. The total R squared for the model with this subsample is .48 for perceptions of trusting social contacts, and .46 for perceptions of participation in a collective purpose, apparently explaining a large portion of variance based on responses to a reasonably reliable and valid index.

Figure 3 demonstrates how the proposed model is more accurate in estimating paths of effect for women. Our data support all of the hypothesized paths for this subsample.

Figure 3. Path analysis results for women.

1. Employment (sd=.491)
2. Activity with Others (sd=1.636)
3. Equality with Others (sd=2.428)
4. Opportunity for Social Contact (sd=2.797)
5. Trusting Social Contact (sd=1.469)
6. Norm Development (sd=1.1)
7. Participation in a Collective Purpose (Norm Formalization) (sd=1.401)

The total R squared for women was .68 for perceptions of trusting social contacts, and .66 for perceptions of participation in a collective purpose. Employment appears to affect these variables in different ways for the two sexes, and differences in paths of effect are even more apparent in attempts to "fit the model to the data."

Beyond the specific theoretical propositions described here, further analysis can test whether any alternative, simpler model may fit the reported data as well as one originally proposed. The
model in Figure 4 proved to not be significantly different (p=.05) than the original model in the amount of variance explained for men.

Figure 4. Path analysis results for men on a simplified model.

1. Employment (sd=.494)
2. Activity with Others (sd=1.460)
3. Equality with Others (sd=2.748)
5. Trusting Social Contact (sd=1.413)
7. Participation in a Collective Purpose (Norm Formalization) (sd=1.245)

![](image.png)

p < .001 unless otherwise indicated

Our data support a path of influence from activity with others to trusting social contacts for this group (B=.70, p < .001). The dominant influences on participation in a collective purpose for men were trusting social contacts (B=.53, p < .001) and perceptions of equality with others (B=.26, p < .001).

For women, the results were quite different, as shown in Figure 5. This model was not significantly different (p=.05) in the amount of variance explained for women than the original model. The female subsample showed a more complex path of influence on trusting social contacts from both activity with others (B=.48, p < .001) and from opportunity for social contacts (B=.41, p < .001). For women, it was not perceptions of trusting social contact but having opportunity for social contact that apparently led to a sense of participating in a collective purpose (B=.42, p < .001). Similar to men, the more equal with others women perceived themselves, the more they apparently sensed participation in a collective purpose (B=.45, p < .001).
Discussion

The results of this exploratory study suggest four ways that social work can shape employment experiences to meet the particular needs of men and women to achieve psychosocial well-being. (a) Both men and women apparently need to be involved in the activity of mutual social exchange in work relationships to develop a sense of trusting social contacts with others. This trust allows workers to count on each other for solving and working through both personal problems and production problems, leading to psychosocial well-being and to higher worker productivity. Activity with others could be enhanced by management styles and job task structuring which allow for high levels of interaction, and by workplace designs which promote access among workers.
(b) Women appear to be different from men in the way they value social exchanges as equals (opportunities for social contact) which contribute to trusting social contacts. It may be that women value egalitarian exchange more because they have a history of not being treated equally. Perhaps, men also value equality in developing trusting relationships, but they have traditionally had it and do not realize its value, not having gone without it. The women in the sample may be pointing out the importance of equal treatment for all employees in developing trusting social contacts. Both men and women appear to see activity with others as leading to increased equality among workers and this increased equality leading to opportunities for egalitarian social exchanges. Equal treatment for employees could be implemented through equal pay for equal work, equal input to decisions, equal chances for promotion based on abilities, and being equally respected by others for one's contributions regardless of sex.

(c) For both men and women, perceptions of being treated as equals with others appeared to promote their developing a sense of collective purpose in the employment setting. Reducing pay and status differences in work organizations could enhance the development of purpose in employees. Welfare employment programs could enhance worker productivity and personal sense of purpose by paying prevailing wages for work performed, offering work environments comparable to prevailing standards, encouraging advancement based on abilities, and treating men and women similarly. David Ellwood (1988) suggests that such egalitarian treatment could be enhanced by the elimination of welfare programs and making employment available to all prospective workers so that welfare recipients are not isolated and stigmatized. Whether welfare recipients are afforded respect in the normal labor markets or in drastically altered welfare employment programs, it appears that they could benefit in being treated as equals with other citizens.

(d) Although men and women both appear to relate increased egalitarian treatment to an increased sense of purpose and the psychosocial well-being it provides, men appear to perceive more of a need for trusting social contacts to attain this
result as opposed to women's requirement for more opportunities for social contacts. Again, it is possible that men value trusting social contact as a contributor to participation in a collective purpose because they have not traditionally experienced it. Women can often develop trusting social contacts more easily because they are more oriented to collective efforts (deBeauvoir, 1953) and may naturally develop more trusting relationships in the process. As a result, women may not relate trusting social contacts directly to participation in a collective purpose. Women have often been denied the opportunity to exchange expertise and ability with others as equals, however. They may see the equal exchange of opportunity for social contact as especially important in light of this history. It appears that social workers need to tailor their services to help women be seen as equals in their work activities and to help men develop more trust in their social contacts at work.

Implications of this exploratory research are limited to the population studied, older union workers in a northern, industrial city. Further work is needed to determine if results are similar for younger and nonunionized workers and those in other localities. Also, the efforts toward "fitting the model to the data" are atheoretical. Since they form the base of many of the implications discussed here, it is especially important that they be grounded in theory. Because of the relatively small size of the female subsample (n=57), replication with a larger sample is in order. Understood in the context of these limitations however, this exploratory research has supported some basic theoretical relationships and refined others relevant to how employment effects psychosocial well-being for men and women. It provides a starting point for developing theory based practice and further research on how social work can help men and women successfully address their specific needs to enhance psychosocial well-being in employment settings.
Appendix

Pretested scale items, grouped by concept area they measure, are as follow (numbers indicate order on questionnaire):

Activity with Others Scale
1. During the last month, my activities with others have been so limited that I have often been bored.
   .....agree .....disagree
20. Most of the time, I have been busy doing something with other people during the last month.
   .....agree .....disagree
2. My days have been full of things to do with other people during the last month.
   .....agree .....disagree
21. During the last month, I have enjoyed spending alot of time with my friends.
   .....agree .....disagree

Equality with Others Scale
3. Equality is just an idea, I don’t really have the same chance to succeed as other people do.
   .....agree .....disagree
10. I have just as good a chance as the next person to make it to the top in the kind of work I do.
   .....agree .....disagree
4. Even though I may go through some harder times than other people, things even out in the end.
   .....agree .....disagree
22. In the long run, the world is basically fair.
   .....agree .....disagree
23. You usually get what is coming to you based on how hard you try.
   .....agree .....disagree
24. I have just as good a chance as the next person to make alot of money at what I do.
   .....agree .....disagree
11. Most people are too busy to help a person when he (sic) is down.
   .....agree .....disagree
25. Who you know in life is more important than what you know.
   .....agree .....disagree

Opportunity for Social Contact Scale
12. I have had as much of a chance to meet new people during the last month as I ever had.
   .....agree .....disagree
5. During the last three months, I went on or made plans for a vacation where I had a chance to meet people.
   .....agree  .....disagree
13. During the last month, I have been invited to at least two events where I could meet other people.
   .....agree  .....disagree
26. During the last month, I have not had enough money to go out with my friends like I used to.
   .....agree  .....disagree
6. During the last month, I have not been able to afford the same kind of recreation with other people I used to enjoy.
   .....agree  .....disagree
7. I used to “treat” others just for fun or on special occasions, but during the last month, I have not been able to afford it.
   .....agree  .....disagree
14. During the last month, there has been enough money in my budget to go out and have fun with others.
   .....agree  .....disagree
32. I don’t worry about having things to do because I always seem to have the chance to go out with friends.
   .....agree  .....disagree

Social Contact Scale
8. During the last month, in general, I have talked things over with my friends less than I used to.
   .....agree  .....disagree
27. During the last month, I have shared a lot of my time with my friends like they have with me.
   .....agree  .....disagree
9. During the last month, most of the time I have been alone rather than doing things with my friends.
   .....agree  .....disagree
15. During the last month, my friends and I have spent a lot (sic) of time helping each other out.
   .....agree  .....disagree

Norm Development Scale
16. My life is not much different than the life of most people I know.
   .....agree  .....disagree
28. I seem to be different than other people I know.
   .....agree  .....disagree
29. Things have changed so much for me recently that I don’t know that to expect next.
   .....agree  .....disagree
17. I sometimes wonder what people expect from me.
   .....agree  .....disagree
Norm Formalization Scale

18. During the past month, I have been able to count on my friends to let me know when I have been "getting out of line."
   .....agree .....disagree

30. During the last month, if I needed some good advice, I could get it from my friends.
   .....agree .....disagree

19. During the last month, I have been able to work with other people on goals I want to achieve and to make progress on my goals.
   .....agree .....disagree

31. During the last month, I have had trouble fitting in with the usual things people do.
   .....agree .....disagree

References


Illness career descent is a process involving the downward trajectory of chronic illness and the residents' downward movement through the organizational structure of the retirement facility. This structure can be conceptualized as a "descending" hierarchy where residents experience downward mobility through successively lower statuses. These conceptualizations are grounded in three years of participant observation and interviews with over 150 residents at a multilevel care retirement facility. Downward mobility, within the facility, entails relocation to more regimented and stigmatized residency situations. The individual's goal is to slow down the pace of this illness career timetable. Descending hierarchical structures within facilities for the aged exacerbate the effects of the residents' declining health by disrupting social networks, decreasing control, and negatively affecting the resident's self-concept.

There are a variety of living arrangements for the elderly which form a housing continuum (Thompson, 1982), a healthcare continuum (Koff, 1982), and a continuum of institutional totality (Markson, 1982). While there has been considerable research on the dynamics of living and dying in nursing homes...
Illness Career Descent and the Descending Hierarchy

(Gubrium, 1975; Tobin and Lieberman, 1976; Gustafson, 1978), less research has concentrated on older people at multilevel care facilities as they progress through their illness careers. Multi-level care facilities offer a research advantage since they encompass a broad range of the housing/health-care continuum within a single institution or facility.

Marshall (1975) focused on residents in bilevel care facilities and how their dying careers could be understood as a "terminal status passage". Morgan (1982) focused on the healthcare careers and negotiation processes for residents within a bilevel care facility as they resisted relocation to the skilled nursing section. He described the conflictual nature of interactions between residents and staff as "...bargaining between those moving through the career and those with control over the career" (1982, p. 40). The residents' downward movement from semi-independent living to the nursing facility was characterized as being taken "...away from social independence and toward a medically determined way of life" (Morgan, 1982, p. 40).

These studies and others, demonstrate that illness can be viewed as a career or a process with a beginning, intervening stages, and an end (Manning and Zucker, 1976). Some illnesses move upward toward recovery, and others move downward toward further deterioration and foreseeable death (Strauss et al., 1985). Among the elderly suffering from chronic illnesses, illness careers generally move downward (Strauss, 1973). Within multilevel care facilities, designed to accommodate the residents' increasing health-care needs, there is an organizational structure which shapes the residents' experiences of their illness careers. As their health declines, residents are moved down through the levels at the facility which has been referred to as illness career descent (Fisher, 1987).

This paper develops a complementary focus to prior research by examining the process of illness career descent and how it is built into the organizational structure of a trilevel care retirement facility. The social structure of such a facility can best be conceptualized as a "descending hierarchy". Relocations downward are the benchmarks of the typical illness career for residents at the retirement facility. Residents attempt to prevent or postpone relocation while staff members monitor resi-
Students' behaviors to evaluate when relocation should take place. There is an inherent conflict between consumers and those who control the provision of services in medically oriented settings (Roth, 1963; Goffman, 1961; McCoy, 1988; Zola, 1972). The structure of the multilevel care facility and its emphasis on health evaluation and relocation has a negative effect on the residents and their interactions with staff members.

Methods

For three years, I investigated the social and cultural factors affecting elderly people's ability to adjust to life in a retirement facility, Rolling Meadows. Qualitative data on the retirement facility were gathered through participant observation in a variety of roles including (in chronological order): activity volunteer, facilitator of a "men's life-history" seminar, consultant/ombudsperson for residents, and as an openly declared social gerontologist doing research. Each of these role transitions granted me deeper access into the lives of the residents (and to some extent, the work lives of the staff) and built up the necessary trust to complete such a study.

In addition to participant observation, interviews were conducted with both staff and residents. Open-ended interviews were conducted with over 150 residents at the retirement facility providing information on residents' perceptions of and experience within the facility and their attitudes toward self. These interviews, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, focused on the residents' responses to declining health of self and others, the adjustment process, placement within the facility, finding friends within the facility, interactions between residents and staff, loss of control over life activities, and the advantages and disadvantages of living within the facility. Open-ended interviews with the full range of staff members provided information concerning the formal structure of the facility and procedures for relocating residents. While interviews were conducted with both staff and residents, this paper purposely emphasizes illness career descent from the residents' point of view.
Description of the Setting

Rolling Meadows is a modern retirement complex offering multi-level care by combining a residential (230 units) and a nursing home (70 beds) facility. At full capacity, Rolling Meadows can house 300 individuals. In the residential section, residents rent their apartments rather than "buying in" with a lump sum as required by continuing care contracts at other facilities. Everything within the retirement complex is geared to the health condition of the people served there. Currently, the average age is 84.

There are three distinct types of residency: Semi-Independent Living, for those who can maintain their own apartments with minimal supervision; Intermediate Care, for those requiring moderate supervision and 24 hour nursing service availability; and a Nursing Center for those requiring skilled nursing care. The various residency classifications are separated spatially: Semi-Independent Living (SIL) is available on floors 1, 2, 3, and 5; Intermediate Care (IC) is on the fourth floor; and the Nursing Center is a separate building attached to the back of the residential section. This formal segregation of residency classifications is further reinforced by separate dining facilities and activities for each group.

Findings

The Organizational Structure of the Retirement Facility

At the retirement facility, the residency classifications form a hierarchy. Hierarchies establish the relationship between individuals through a system of ranking or ordering based on some criteria of evaluation accepted as relevant within the system. There is usually agreement, or at least acceptance, of the criteria used as a basis for changing one's rank or position within the social structure. At Rolling Meadows, it is primarily the residents' level of mental and physical functioning that determines their "rank" or where they are initially located, and subsequently relocated, within the residential structure. Residents and staff at the retirement facility agree, in principle, that certain levels of health are necessary to live in certain residency
classifications. Therefore, location is used by residents to form expectations about others they may encounter at the facility. In this sense, one’s health status and residency location form the basis of a general status which affects all other aspects of one’s social life at the facility.

At Rolling Meadows, the residency classifications form a status hierarchy where residents “on top” enjoy greater privileges and the esteem of others without having power over those of lesser status. This status hierarchy is organized with Semi-Independent Living residents at the top, Intermediate Care residents in the middle, and Nursing Center patients at the bottom.

After relocation, residents experience a shift in status when they are subsequently viewed and treated as if they are less capable and less competent. Two residents relocated to the IC floor expressed this in the following quotes:

The residents fight being moved to the fourth floor. It has the implication of you not being what you once were. When I was moved to this floor, I felt demeaned because they were seeming to tell me I was less capable mentally. (woman, 84)

The people up here are somewhat different. I feel I was put into third class. I feel like I’m a third rate citizen. Less freedom and privileges. (woman, 86)

This diminished status is also revealed by the negative stereotypes that residents hold about those in the more regimented sections of the facility. Those on the IC floor are referred to as “those confused people”, “those people who make no sense”, and “those with their minds all gone”. The patients in the nursing section are referred to as: “the slowly dying”, “the living dead”, “the crazies”, or the “feeble-minded”.

Hierarchies can be classified according to the type of movement of individuals within a particular social system. Open hierarchies, the focus of this discussion, can be classified as “ascending” or “descending” depending on whether the movement is predominantly upward or downward (Fisher, 1987; Fisher and Tryban, 1985). There is movement along a career path with provision for movement from one level to another. Such careers
generally form a pattern of existence peculiar to the particular requirements of a given institution.

The social structure at Rolling Meadows exemplifies the idea of the "descending" hierarchy. A resident's illness career and movement at the retirement facility are almost exclusively downward. There is occasional upward movement of residents, but this is usually from the Nursing Center to the IC floor. Upward mobility usually occurs for those entering directly into the Nursing Center due to temporarily severe health problems. When their health improves, they may be moved up to the next level. Residents who have been relocated downward are rarely moved back to their prior residency classification.

One's position when one enters the descending hierarchy is substantially different from one's position on entering an ascending hierarchy. One usually enters an ascending hierarchy at the bottom of the ladder. At this point, one's possession of desired attributes is viewed as low in comparison to future expectations. By contrast, when one enters a descending hierarchy, one's possession of desired attributes (e.g., health and functional mobility) is viewed as high relative to the expectation that they will decline thereafter. While individuals in ascending hierarchies usually start at the bottom and try to move up, in the descending hierarchy, most start at the top and struggle to remain there.

In ascending hierarchies, exit is viewed as a promotion or a graduation to a future promising higher achieved status. Progress through one's career is associated with feelings of accomplishment, mastery and success. There is reason for hope and congratulations. The nature of this exit is markedly dissimilar for those moving through the hierarchy at the retirement facility. Progress through one's career is progress down through continually lower ascribed statuses. Movement and exit at Rolling Meadows is mourned, not celebrated, and is usually anticipated with dread and sadness.

In contrast to ascending hierarchies, where progress represents improvement and is pursued as actively as possible, progress through a "descending" hierarchy is avoided and delayed as long as possible. Downward mobility within the structure at Rolling Meadows is much more than a residen-
tial relocation. It also symbolizes an irreversible lessening of control, the stigma of being seen as less competent and less capable, and one's increasing disability and proximity to death (Fisher, in press). The resident's goal is to slow down the pace of the career timetable. This lack of progress through their illness careers is the residents' mark of success.

Illness Career Descent from the Residents' Perspective

Most of the residents at Rolling Meadows suffer from chronic illnesses and expect to experience further declines in health. This is coupled with the discomforting realization that there is no "getting better". Residents readily recognize the pattern of health deterioration followed by relocation within Rolling Meadows. This is illustrated by the following quotes from two SIL residents:

It was hard to understand the changes when people were moved up to the 4th floor. It's awful to see people coming and going. You have to get a crust on you. Sometimes it's more than you can take. It isn't easy. (woman, 79)

That's the worst thing about being here...seeing others going down. They come and they go. (woman, 87)

Watching the deteriorating health of other residents and their subsequent relocation sensitizes residents to the fact that this represents their own likely future:

When I first moved here, it was hard to see people that seemed in good health and watch them slowly deteriorate and wind up on the 4th floor. You begin to wonder then how long you have before you wind up like that. (woman, 88)

The threats of health deterioration and relocation downward continually hang over the residents' heads. This fear is reinforced by an awareness that Rolling Meadows is designed to accommodate declining health or, as one SIL resident put it: "This is a place where people go and slowly get worse. A place to go and die. We're just trying to hold on to what we've got left." (woman, 78) Relocation to the IC floor is a fate that most SIL
residents wish to avoid, a fate that some perceive as worse than death as the following quote indicates: "It’s the end of the road. I would never want to be moved to the 4th floor. You’re almost incarcerated there. I don’t think I could accept it. I’d rather be dead." (man, 82) There is even greater fear about being moved to the Nursing Center since it is associated with severe disability and the loss of dignity. "You lose all dignity there. I’d rather die a quick death than the slow death you have there." (SIL, woman, 85) The general sentiment is that the Nursing Center is not a place one goes to live, but to die.

Prior to relocation, residents have usually been approached by staff on specific behavioral or physical problems. Semi-Independent Living residents are aware that they are being observed and evaluated.

They’ve talked to me before so I try and keep active and do a lot of things. I’m hoping that they’ll see that as a sign that I’m OK. I just don’t want to be moved to that floor. I couldn’t stand it. I'd go crazy for sure. (woman, 79)

Knowing that one is at risk of relocation and being told one is to be relocated create very different responses. Residents at risk attempt to postpone the move by changing or hiding undesirable behavior. The threat of relocation is minimized as long as one’s disabilities are not readily apparent. Impression management is crucial for residents attempting to slow down the pace of illness career descent.

They don’t move you to the 4th floor unless it becomes visible. I don’t think I’ll be moved because I’m seen around a lot and am still physically mobile. (woman, 85)

I don’t have any physical problems but I do have emotional ones. I have to contribute to this place because I don’t want them to see that I have emotional problems. Things like that get spread around and the next thing they’re whisking you off to the 4th floor. (woman, 83)

Favorably presenting oneself in public is one way to prevent downward mobility, but it is not the only way. Maintaining
one's privacy is another protective strategy to avoid supplying others with information which could be used as criteria for relocation.

**Resident and Staff Interactions**

When people enter the retirement complex, their ability to manage daily responsibilities is assessed and then used to determine their initial placement within the facility. Residents are aware that staff members are responsible for monitoring, reporting on, and evaluating the residents' behaviors and ability to function within their residency classifications. As one SIL resident put it: "You feel like you're being judged all the time for being moved to the 4th floor. I don't like that." (woman, 82)

Staff observations and evaluations, taken collectively, form the rationale for moving a resident from one classification to the next. The residents' desire to maintain privacy as a strategy for avoiding relocation downward suggests one aspect of the strain which is ever present in resident and staff interactions.

If a staff member sees a resident displaying inappropriate behavior, seeming to be ill, or acting in any way out of the ordinary, he or she is obligated to report this information to the nurses. One staff member commented on this information network:

> Any time we notice a change in behavior, or unusual behavior, we are asked to write it down. I would report an incident of something strange that had happened or at least when I notice something going on. I'll go talk to the nurses and they'll put it right in the nurses' notes to keep an eye on a particular resident.

Private information or behavior a resident may wish to keep concealed has the potential of becoming general staff knowledge. A resident's conduct at one activity or in one setting can affect how staff interact with him or her in other settings, i.e., there is a desegregation of the spheres of life (Goffman, 1961).

Residents know they are being evaluated and most recognize this as a good thing so the proper regimen of health-care can be provided. On the other hand, residents are also aware
that such evaluations form the basis of staff decisions to relocate residents to more regimented parts of the facility. Residents are placed in the dilemma of how much to share with staff members whom they view as friends. Staff members are in a similar dilemma. They know they must report information on the residents' conditions, but friendship with residents requires that they maintain confidences even when it overrides set facility policy.

Another aspect of staff and resident interactions in the regulation of the residents' daily activities to guarantee the smooth and efficient management of various operations at the facility. This need to control the residents' daily lives for the sake of efficiency necessarily results in a more supervised and regimented environment. Residents are aware they can no longer exert the same control they once enjoyed while living in their own homes (Fisher, 1989).

The emphasis on social control creates the potential for conflict between staff goals and the residents' wishes. Brody (1977) notes that residents who try to exert control over their lives get labeled by staff as "bad residents." Compliant residents make it easier for staff to run the facility in a smooth and efficient manner. Becoming a "complainer" results in undesirable consequences for the residents' relationships with staff as the following quotes illustrate:

One of the nurses made a sarcastic remark about me to another nurse. I wanted to say something but I've learned to be careful. The nurses don't come around as quickly when you need them if you complain a lot. (IC, woman, 92)

If they [the staff] do something I don't like, I don't say anything. They're my lifeline. I depend on them for almost everything. They're awfully good to me around here and I don't want that to change. (SIL, woman, 87)

The interactions between staff and residents are usually cordial, but are subject to periodic strains resulting primarily from the observational and evaluative responsibilities of the staff. While staff members maintain a sharp watch for inappropriate behavior among the residents, the residents seek to avoid
negative evaluations which can result in relocation to a more regimented part of the facility.

Relocation Downward and the Effect on Self-Concept

Throughout the process of illness career descent, the individual is confronted with the task of incorporating a series of life changes into his or her self-concept. Negotiating one's identity during illness career descent depends on how rapidly one's health declines. If there are long periods of stability in the illness trajectory, then it is easier for individuals to accept whatever limitations are placed on their lives. The individual has time to reflect and assess what has changed and what remains the same. If health declines more rapidly, the disruptions may be too frequent and too great for the individual to successfully integrate these changes into his or her self-concept (Strauss et al., 1985). This is illustrated by the following comment of an IC resident:

I feel like whole bites have been taken out of me. No time to brace myself or to prepare for this. I wasn't prepared for the emotional impact. I had my world pretty well set up. It's a readjustment to go through this and I'm finding it very hard. I'm so disgusted with myself. (woman, 92)

Kaufman (1987) noted that stroke patients mentioned three major problems when discussing recovery: 1) discontinuity of life patterns, 2) the failure to return to normal, and 3) the redefined self. Illness career descent involves similar problems for relocated residents at the retirement facility. Relocated residents are confronted with the reality that their daily lives have been seriously disrupted and that resuming their previous “normal” lifestyle is no longer possible. The following comments of IC residents illustrate such an awareness:

You can recover but you can never go back to what you were. (woman, 88)

The hardest part of this illness is knowing I'm never going to get any better. I can expect to be this way or worse for the rest of my life. (woman, 90)
Residents experiencing illness career descent know their lives have been permanently altered. This poses a serious challenge to residents as they attempt to integrate declining health and resulting life changes into their self-concepts. The challenge is to build linkages between the old self and the self now reflected in their new social surroundings. Relocation downward threatens the resident's self-concept by disrupting social networks, subjecting the resident to negative stereotypes, and by eroding his or her sense of control and independence. The following quotes from IC residents illustrate this:

My old friends don't seem to want to bother and come up and see me. Maybe they don't think I'm as with it anymore. I'm not the person I used to be. (man, 91)

All you have to do is say to people here that you're on the fourth floor and they think your mind is all gone. They think everyone up here is senile. That hurts. (woman, 84)

They treat us like children sometimes up here. They tell us when to eat and how to dress. I know my health isn't as good as it once was, but I like to think I can still do those things for myself. (woman, 84)

The IC residents are aware of who they were and that their lives have changed as a result of deteriorating health and relocation.

It's terrible to be at this age and feel I have no value. I'm just useless. A dead weight. (woman, 83)

I feel inadequate. That means I have nothing to contribute, that I'm not worth anything anymore. I just hate myself. (woman, 79)

Relocated residents feel they are viewed differently by staff and other residents and initially come to see themselves as somehow changed. Viewing themselves as "dead weight" or "worthless" suggests how relocation can negatively affect self-concept and self-worth.
Summary and Implications

It is the responsibility of the health professionals at Rolling Meadows to meet the ever changing health and long-term care needs of the residents. The staff members continually monitor the residents to ensure they receive proper care and to make appropriate relocations when circumstances mandate such action. Despite the fact that the residents' medical needs are well cared for, this study suggests that being in a retirement facility can have a detrimental effect on the residents' sense of self and social well-being.

Clearly there is a need for living environments which can accommodate the older individual's increasing health-care needs, but should this take priority over his or her nonmedical needs? Retirement facilities like Rolling Meadows are organized primarily to manage residents' physical health with a less concentrated focus on preserving the older person's social relationships, life activities, and general sense of social worth. At Rolling Meadows, this imbalance in priorities was reflected, in part, by the presence of only one social worker to serve the needs of approximately 300 individuals.6

In handling the needs of the residents, the staff members seem to adopt a crisis intervention strategy. Crisis intervention endorses an approach which is highly controlling and invasive of privacy. This is an appropriate response to a crisis which is temporally limited and is required to stabilize the individual's condition. Such an approach is inappropriate for most of the residents, however, who experience the slower more subtle, deterioration of chronic diseases. These illness careers are generally marked by gradual decline including plateaus with relative stability. During these plateaus, the individual may be able to resume a relatively normal lifestyle. To adopt a crisis intervention approach toward chronic disease unnecessarily undermines the individual's sense of personal control and disrupts his or her social activities and relationships.

In one sense, this reflects how staff and residents are both constrained by the organizational structure in which they work and live respectively. Regulations and ethics require that staff members monitor the changing health-care needs of the residents and, in some ways intrude upon their privacy. Residents,
wanting to hold on to their independence and personal control, will try to conceal health problems that may threaten autonomy. Staff members must make judgements in order to initially place and relocate residents in appropriate levels within the facility to accommodate the residents' functional capabilities. The residents, on the other hand, do not enjoy being under staff scrutiny and fear relocation and view it as a threat to their daily routine and sense of self.

Much of the problem arises out of an imbalance between the emphasis on physical health and the need for social health. Many residents perceived a lengthy illness career descent as a slow social death characterized by friends pulling away, a shrinkage of activities, and the growing stigma of incompetence. This social death undermines their sense of personal control and their ability to age and die with dignity. The impact of the organizational structure on the residents results less from the actual relocation and more from the subsequent social consequences of relocation. The key appears to be maintaining the residents' sense of personal control and keeping them socially as well as physically alive.

Special training would enhance staff members' sensitivity to the concerns and fears of the residents. For example, the staff could help preserve the residents' personal control by maintaining the residents' privacy to whatever extent possible and by more actively including them in decision making processes. Residents could participate in deciding when their relocation takes place rather than the usual two week notification prior to relocation. In addition, more advance notice would permit residents to prepare for the move and to develop a more positive attitude about their new residency setting. In other words, the resident should be a team member and not a mere consumer of the services provided.

Overall, this suggests a need for staff trained to help the residents adjust. In addition, staff should recognize the residents' needs not as a matter of managing crises, but as a long-term plan into which the resident will have significant input. Understanding that the residents are concerned about social well-being and physical well-being suggests that the staff should also emphasize preserving as many of the older person's life activities and
friendship networks as possible. This promotes a sense of continuity in the older person’s life throughout the process of health deterioration and relocation. Residents must also participate in the restructuring of the social environment within the facility. Rather than engaging in negative stereotyping, residents can build a greater sense of community and empathy. Increased social interaction between residency levels should help reduce the sense of social isolation after relocation. Residents can also be encouraged to organize and participate in awareness groups that deal with effective coping strategies. Again, this involves the residents and gives them a sense of control over what often confronts them as a seemingly “uncontrollable” future.

As with any study based on interviews or case studies, care should be used when generalizing these results to other retirement facilities. Further research is needed to assess the extent to which other retirement facilities have similar organizational structures and the impact these have on residents’ self-concepts and social well-being. Clearly, there is a need for facilities like Rolling Meadows to develop and implement programs to help reduce the stigma and trauma of living within what will likely be the residents’ “last home”.

References


Notes

1. The name of this retirement facility is fictitious.
2. This residency situation is actually referred to as Independent Living which more accurately reflects a marketing strategy. Residents are required to take three meals a day in a central dining area and depend on staff to provide them with a variety of services (e.g. distribution of medicine, transportation, etc.).
3. During my three years at the facility, there have been only two occasions where residents were moved from a lower to a higher residency classification (i.e., from the Nursing Center to the IC floor).
4. This policy is supported by staff who would rather relocate a resident once rather than moving the resident back up a level and then have the resident’s health deteriorate and subject him or her to the trauma of another relocation.
5. There are rare instances where residents in the more regimented sec-
tions move upward in the facility or exit from the facility to what is perceived as a better situation. This movement upward or outward is cause for celebration.

6. This social worker was also the director of health services and spent most of her time fulfilling administrative duties and handling the problems of 70 patients in the nursing center. She had virtually no time to devote to the problems of the other 230 residents.
Women in Blue-Collar Occupations: An Exploration of Constraints and Facilitators

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This study reports on some of the variables which facilitate and impede work satisfaction among women in nontraditional occupations. A small sample of women working as machinists, pipe fitters, carpenters, electricians, technicians, and construction workers reported that sexual harassment on the job impeded their work satisfaction. Respondents' perceptions of equality in pay and promotion on the job, and congruence between work and domestic roles, served to enhance work satisfaction. Age was related to a sense of competence, perception of equality on the job, and congruence between work and domestic roles. Social support significantly enhanced work satisfaction.

The high proportion of female-headed families living in poverty has brought an increased awareness of the relationship between poverty and the low status of women in the occupational hierarchy. Because 70% of employed women are concentrated in low-paying service jobs, many do not earn sufficient wages to keep their families above the poverty level (Shortridge, 1986). One way that women can earn wages comparable to that of men is to integrate into nontraditional work, defined as jobs where 75% of the employees are males (Lenikan, 1983).

In the past decade, much research emphasis has been placed on the increased participation of women in the managerial and administrative sector of the labor force. The social science literature has devoted much less attention to the entry of women into skilled crafts, despite the fact that such occupations pay a much higher average wage than do typically female occupations (Fox & Hesse-Biber, 1986).

As women enter skilled crafts, such as carpentry and electrical work, their high turnover rates reflect the obstacles to achieving work tenure in the all male domain of nontraditional
work (Walshok, 1981). Although variables that hinder or facilitate work satisfaction have received increased attention in the past decade, few studies have concentrated on women crossing the gender boundaries of skilled crafts. This topic deserves further investigation because blue-collar jobs may be more difficult for women to enter and to keep than is the case with professional occupations (Gerson, 1982).

Figure 1 depicts a conceptual model developed by Quick and Quick (1984). The model depicts some of the obstacles and the facilitators associated with work tenure and work satisfaction among women in administrative and managerial positions (Quick & Quick, 1984). These factors, including sexual harassment, job discrimination, role conflict, emotional support and competence, may be expected to impact work satisfaction among women in blue-collar occupations as well.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the constraints on and facilitators of work tenure and satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>Facilitators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination in Pay and promotion</td>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Harassment</td>
<td>Competence</td>
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<td>Conflicting Roles</td>
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Barriers to Work Tenure and Work Satisfaction

The works of Walshok (1981) and Yogev & Brett (1985) substantiate Quick & Quick's model of discrimination in pay and promotion, sexual harassment, and role conflicts as barriers to work satisfaction and work tenure among women. After three decades of rapid increases in the labor force participation of women, role conflict remains an obstacle for those women who assume the dual roles of homemaker and wage earner (Astin, 1985). These roles tend to overlap and create stressful
situations when performance in one of these roles is thwarted by the demands of the other. Some authorities believe that gender role assignments in the home are becoming more flexible, but husbands' participation in the domestic sphere is still limited (Smith & Reid, 1982).

Inequalities in pay are reflected by the gender gap in earnings which is predicted to narrow to where women will be earning 85% of male wages in the year 2000 (Cetron, 1988). Persistent gender stratification of the labor force where women are predominantly occupied at the lower level with minimal promotional opportunities is one of the reasons they now earn only 64% of the average male wages (Rosenfelt & Stacey, 1987).

The prevalence of sexual harassment on the job is closely related to the subjugation of women in low level positions and lack of promotional opportunities. Women are increasingly articulating their opposition to verbal and physical sexual harassment often in the form of requests for sexual favors in return for career advancements (Sapiro, 1986).

The Facilitators: Social Support and Competence

The feminist movement has created an awareness among women of the beneficial aspects of emotional support. Social networking serves to enhance the sense of competence that women often lack (Cooper & Davidson, 1982). Females have been found to be much more likely to request support and they find social support more helpful and available than do men (Butler, 1985). Moreover, the buffering effects of social support in mediating work stress have been well documented (House, 1980; Pines, 1981).

Quick and Quick (1984) found that social support and a sense of competence served to buffer the effects of isolation and stress among women in managerial occupations. However, the impact of social support on the unique experiences of women in nontraditional blue collar work has not been subjected to much empirical investigation.

Social support is comprised of four components; emotional, appraisal, informational and instrumental support (House, 1980). Although the concepts emotional support and social support are used interchangeable in the literature, emotional
support is used in this study because it is more conceptually clear measure than the more general term social support (LaRocco, House, and French, 1980).

For future generations of women workers, increased awareness about the need for support on the part of young women may affect changes in future prospects for gender integration of the workforce. In addition, the effects of various types of support, including support from spouses, friends and coworkers, may have differential impact on women’s well-being on the job.

Age and Work Satisfaction

Studies introducing gender as a salient variable have found an inverse relationship between age and work satisfaction. That is, young women have tended to report a greater degree of satisfaction with work than their older counterparts (Arnold & Feldman, 1982).

There is some indication that young women tend to believe that gender equality has been achieved (Bolotin, 1982). The post-feminist generation may view the non-traditional work environment as being more hospitable than do women born before the second wave of feminism in the 60s.

The Study Rationale

There is a dearth of research about the variables associated with work satisfaction and work tenure among women in blue-collar occupations. Therefore this study is exploratory in nature as the associations between the variables depicted in Figure 1 are analyzed. Specifically, the research questions addressed are whether there are age differences in the perception of obstacles to work satisfaction and work tenure among women in the skilled crafts. In other words, do younger women perceive a greater equality in pay and promotion and less sexual harassment and role conflicts, than do their older counterparts? Secondly, are there age differences in the level of emotional support and competence among women blue-collar workers? And finally, are age, perception of equality in pay and promotion, sexual harassment, role conflict, emotional support and competence significantly related to work satisfaction and work tenure?
Methodology

Sample

Employers of five organizations employing skilled craft workers were asked to distribute questionnaires to their female employees. The questionnaires were designed to assess the factors which might enhance or reduce work satisfaction. All respondents who reported having undergone at least six months of work training for the job were included in the study. This nonrandom sample was comprised of 46 women employed in blue-collar, skilled or semiskilled craft occupations in a mid-sized city in a southern state in 1986. The instructions for study participation included the assurance that participation in the study was voluntary and that individual responses would be confidential. The respondents were instructed to mail back their completed questionnaires in self-addressed, stamped envelopes attached to the survey instrument.

Respondents' occupational categories included 56% employed as electrical and engineering technicians, telephone installers or repairers. The remaining 44% held jobs as machinists, pipe fitters, carpenters, electricians and construction workers. The average work tenure among the respondents was 6 years, ranging from less than 1 year to 12 years.

The mean and the median age of the women who participated in the study was 36, ranging from 25 to 54 years of age. Eighty-nine percent were White, 9% Black, and 2% other racial categories. The median income was $30,000. The mean educational level reported by the respondents was 13 1/2 years of schooling. Twenty-five of the women in the sample were married, 13 had divorced and 6 had never been married.

Measurements

Congruence between work and home responsibilities was measured by asking the respondents whether they felt their work got in the way of family duties, or to what extent home care got in the way of work. The perception of equality on the job was a two-item measure of respondents' perceived equality in pay and promotion. Additionally, one item asked about the
frequency of sexual harassment by coworkers or superiors on the job. The response categories for sexual harassment ranged from "never" to "very often", and the concept was described as sexual innuendos, sexual jokes or harassment.

The measure used to assess competence was a three-item scale used by Veroff, Douvan, and Kulka (1981). These questions asked to what degree respondents felt confident in making decisions affecting the way they live and were able to carry out plans. Emotional support was measured by a four-item index on which the respondents rated the support they received from coworkers, supervisors, friends and spouses. These various sources of support have been found to be a reliable and valid measure of emotional support (LaRocco, House, and French, 1980). The rationale in this study for separating spouse support from support from others was to address the research question posed about the relationship between husbands' support and work satisfaction.

Work satisfaction was a one-item measure of the degree to which the women in the study were satisfied with their work. It is noted that multiple item measures may increase the reliability and validity of work satisfaction. However, one item measures were found to have acceptable criterion validity (Larsen, Diener, and Edmond, 1985). Work tenure was assessed by the number of years the respondent had worked in the type of work in which she was currently employed.

All the measures used in the study were set out in a five-point Likert format, ranging from "very much" to "not at all." The higher the score, the greater the congruence was between work and home care responsibilities, perceived equality in pay and promotion, competence, emotional support and work satisfaction. The higher the score, the lower was the frequency of sexual harassment at work reported by the respondents.

Results

Table 1 presents the significant correlations between age, perception of equality on the job, emotional support, role conflict, competence and work satisfaction. Age was found to be significantly related to the respondents' perception of equality on the job. Younger women reported less discrimination in pay
and promotion than did their older counterparts. No age differences were found in the frequency of sexual harassment, but low frequency of harassment was significantly related to work satisfaction.

Table 1

| Correlation Coefficients Between Age, Constraints and Facilitators of Work Satisfaction |
|:---------------------------------|:-----------------|:-----------------|:-----------------|
|                                   | Age      | Training | Satisfaction |
| Equality in Pay and Promotion    | -.27*    | -.39*    | .27*           |
| Sexual Harassment                | -.17     | -.05     | -.23**         |
| Role Congruence                  | .31*     | .08      | .23**          |
| Competence                       | -.22**   | .03      | .04            |
| Emotional Support                |          |          |                |
| Others                           | -.12     | .07      | .49*           |
| Spouse                           | -.17     | .05      | .18            |

* p = < .05  
** p = < .10

Age was not related to the utilization of support from friends, coworkers or spouses. However, talking with family, friends and coworkers was significantly related to work satisfaction, while support from spouses did not affect work satisfaction.

The younger the woman, the greater she reported her sense of competence in carrying out tasks at work and in the home. Older women tended to report greater congruence between home and work responsibilities than did younger women.

Although no significant correlations were found between work barriers, facilitators and work tenure, equality in pay was related to length of work training. The longer the training period, the more the respondents perceived that they were discriminated against in pay and promotional opportunities. Finally work tenure was not significantly related to the obstacles to or facilitators on work satisfaction.
Discussion

It is important to note that the respondents' average income of $30,000 per year was much higher than for women in general since only one woman worker in ten received more than $20,000 per year annual income in 1982, according to Lief-Palley (1987). It is unclear to what extent the high average wage was attributable to union memberships among the respondents. Union membership among skilled craft workers is much higher than for employees in typically female-type occupations (Fox & Hesse-Biber (1984) and this is one reason for women to cross the boundaries to unionized higher paying male-dominated occupations.

The relatively high wages among women in the skilled crafts are important in terms of the economic well-being of women who comprise the largest poverty population in this country. The entry of women into nontraditional work may be an important poverty reducing strategy.

The results suggest that the fit between the new generation of women workers and the nontraditional working environment may be greater than has been the case for women in the past. This is true with regard to women's perception of equality in pay and promotions as well as competence in decision-making and carrying out their plans. The enhanced social status of women in general is likely to result in greater participation of females in nontraditional occupations in the future, including the skilled crafts.

The results indicating that women who receive longer work training report greater discrimination in pay and promotion seem to substantiate the reward dualism hypothesis. According to this prediction, systematically different rewards exist between males and females with roughly equal credentials, especially as education and training increase (Sanders & Wong, 1985). In general, there seems to be a pervasive ceiling effect to the advancement of working women, which is also true for women in skilled craft occupations.

The high average age of the respondents in this study indicates that many women may begin their work life in female-type occupations before crossing nontraditional boundaries. In the works of one respondent in this study: "Opportunities for
Women in blue-collar occupations is just in its infancy. If I had my job to live over, I'd have a completely different first four years.

For the postfeminist generation of women workers in this study, the problem of sexual harassment on the job is still prevalent. Such harassment is a particularly severe obstacle to work satisfaction among women blue-collar workers (Walshok, 1981). Group norms in the all male domain of blue-collar work may dictate a greater tolerance of sexual innuendos, jokes and even harassment as a protection of gender boundaries. Future generations of women workers may have to persevere in a work atmosphere where sexual harassment continues to serve as a constraint to work satisfaction even as other barriers for women entering blue-collar work are minimized.

The women participants in this study reported various ways in which they responded to sexual harassment on the job. Some women reported that ignoring incidents of harassment was the most functional alternative for them, while others occasionally exchanged jokes and innuendos in an attempt to upstage the men.

On the home front, women are still not receiving the emotional support from their spouses that would buffer the stressful effects of discrimination on the job and the conflicting demands of dual roles. This is particularly true for younger women who experience greater conflicts between home care and work roles than do older women. Emotional support, both in the form of having someone to talk to about work-related problems and help with home care, seems to be a relatively scarce commodity for younger women.

In regard to instrumental or task support, anecdotal evidence offered by the respondents indicates that husbands' unwillingness to assume coresponsibility for domestic and child care is one of the factors that contributes to unfair division of labor in the home. Many women seem to tolerate husbands' limited support in the home because they feel guilty about neglecting their roles as homemakers and mothers (Yogev & Brett, 1985). A 30 year old respondent articulated her need for more help: "All of the responsibilities in the home are mine, including the care of our two-year-old. We are hoping my husband
can learn to share some of these responsibilities, or at least help out some”.

Social policy formulation are not easily extended toward more equitable division of labor in the home. But child care and flexible work hours, both of which feminist activists and scholars have strongly advocated in recent years, provide a partial solution for working mothers. Equitable pay, promotional opportunities, and freedom from sexual harassment call for strict employment policies and enforcement. In the absence of national legislation to promote gender equality, women must strive to unite in the work setting to demand improved opportunities and working conditions.

The exploratory nature and the small sample in this study preclude generalizations of the findings to all women in the skilled crafts. It also should be noted that the sample is skewed toward women in the semiskilled crafts because of the relatively few number of women in the more lucrative skilled crafts (see Fox & Hesse-Biber, 1984). The results, however, point to the need for more extensive multivariate studies of the factors found to affect work satisfaction and tenure among women blue-collar workers. The combined effects of age, competence, marital and parental status of women should be examined and the impact of these variables on role conflict and work satisfaction among women in nontraditional occupations needs to be assessed.

References


The Use of Volunteers by
Governmental Social Services in Israel*

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This article studies an important aspect of coprovision in social service agencies. It focuses on how social welfare departments utilize the resources of volunteers. An indepth study of 14 Local Departments of Social Service (LDSS) in Israel identifies several issues regarding the use of volunteers that have theoretical and practical implications not only for social services but also for other government service organizations engaged in coprovision.

Many public agencies over the last fifteen years have had to face a new challenge of how to provide more services with a strained budget. The problem began in the early 1970s when allocations to governmental services in general and social services in particular started to level off. As a result, agencies began to examine alternative and innovative methods of financing services. One significant solution, advocated both in practice and in professional literature, was coprovision (Ferris, 1984; Brudney and England, 1984). Coprovision (coproduction) may be defined as an arrangement by which citizens cooperate with governmental agencies to produce required goods or services. The citizens' contribution can be that of time, money, expertise, or general support. Thus coprovision enables public agencies to serve a larger number of clients and/or provide higher quality services even though their budgets remain constant. Duncombe (1985) noted that in the United States, a majority of the states have volunteer coordination programs. Furthermore, 72.6% of the American cities had official volunteer programs in a variety of areas.

*The author wishes to thank Dr. Y. Katan of Tel-Aviv University and Edward J. Pawlak, Associate Editor of Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
The use of volunteers is not a new social phenomenon. Yet, it is only in the last ten to fifteen years that government agencies have begun to realize that volunteers are a scarce resource – one that should be well organized, wisely managed, and systematically used and one that requires planned investments. This is a new dimension to the use of volunteers and the essence of coprovision (Brudney, 1985; Scott & Sontheimer, 1985).

While there has been considerable interest in using citizen volunteers to help local governments deliver a variety of public services in police (Sundeen & Siegel, 1986) and fire departments (Lozier, 1976), libraries (Walter, 1987), recreation programs (Duncombe, 1985), and medical settings (Anderson & Clacy, 1987), there has been little interest in using volunteer help in public social welfare services except for senior citizen centers. It may be that social services, which had their origins in volunteer associations, did not keep pace with the new systematic management of volunteers. Wood (1980) noted that volunteers are generally used in social service delivery for the following purposes: to enhance the diversity of services, to provide more individual time, to increase public involvement and commitment to service, to create means of directing innovation and enthusiasm, and to increase flexibility. Volunteers may also have better interpersonal relationships with clients and may enhance communication between professionals and clients. That volunteers can play an important role in providing services is well accepted. Nevertheless what an agency should do to best utilize the volunteers' potential, and how it should be done are issues still open to question. Since there is little empirical knowledge on how to manage volunteers in social welfare services, their full potential has yet to be realized.

The purpose of this article is to fill the void in our knowledge regarding the use and management of volunteers by social service agencies. The article first outlines several major issues identified in the literature as relevant to the use of volunteers by human service organizations. It then describes the study setting, i.e., Israeli Local Departments of Social Services (LDSSs). The study method is described and the findings are presented within the context of the issues identified in the literature. These are followed by discussion and conclusions.
Literature Review

Four important issues in the management of volunteer programs are examined; (a) Who are the volunteers? (b) What services do they perform? (c) What kind of support does the professional staff offer? and (d) To what extent is the staff trained to work with volunteers?

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Volunteers

Several authors have argued that background characteristics are of secondary importance to the motivational and psychological characteristics of volunteers (Gidron, 1984; Kemper, 1980; Miller, 1985; Rubin & Thorelli, 1984). This study, however, focuses on the social services and their use of volunteers, therefore only sociodemographic characteristics are discussed.

A consistent finding in many studies is that women volunteer more than men (Ball, 1978; Cambre, 1984; Chartoff, 1976; Morgan, Dye, & Hybels, 1979). Several explanations for this finding include: availability of time, traditional sex roles, opportunity to gain experience prior to formal education or employment, and a role substitute when children are no longer at home. Luloff, Chittenden, Kriss, Weeks, and Brushett (1984) found that men volunteer more often for boards and civic duties but less frequently to help the poor and needy. The two age groups found to be most involved in volunteerism are the young (usually school children) and the old (usually retired people). Among the elderly, volunteerism may provide a substitute for role losses and for continued feeling of meaningfulness and worthiness (Sainer and Zander, 1971; Cambre, 1984). For young people, volunteerism is often part of an educational program and a means for socialization (Fitzsimmons, 1986; Kelley and Kelley, 1985; Hanks and Ecklund, 1978; Schram, 1985). Gidron (1984) found that in Israeli community centers most volunteers were 18 years of age or younger.

Studies have found that people with high levels of educational achievement tend to volunteer more than people with low levels of educational achievement (ACTION, 1975; Cambre, 1984; Pearce, 1983; Vaillancourt & Payette, 1986).
The literature regarding the association between occupation (i.e., availability of free time) and volunteerism is ambiguous. Hadley and Webb (1975) found that a large group of volunteers had leisure time, i.e., were not full-time workers. Vaillancourt and Payette (1986) found that, in Canada, people who work part-time tend to volunteer more than those who work full-time and those who do not work at all. Chambre (1984) found that the most active volunteers were the better educated and the more affluent who did not work. Morgan et al. (1979) and ACTION (1975) found a higher likelihood of volunteering among working people than among retired and housewives. These contradictory findings can be attributed to those studies which did not control for the impact of education and income on volunteering.

In summary, the literature shows that more volunteers are women, have above-average education, and are either young or old. The question is to what extent do these characteristics correlate with those of the volunteers who assist Local Departments of Social Services (LDSSs) in coprovision of welfare services in Israel?

**Activities Performed by Volunteers**

Lauffer and Gorodezky (1977) and the NASW (1977) used four broad categories to describe volunteer activity in social services: policy making, administration, advocacy, and direct service. Each of these categories can be subdivided as Sieder and Kirschbaum (1977) did in the *Encyclopedia of Social Work*. The literature related to the psychic rewards of volunteerism distinguishes between extrinsic benefits (e.g., status, contacts, and improved resume) and compensatory activity to satisfy personal growth needs (Perry, 1983; Rubin & Thorelli, 1984). In this context, it is generally assumed that policy making and administration are more suitable in providing extrinsic benefits, while advocacy and direct practice are better suited to meeting psychological growth needs.

Traditionally, in direct service, more volunteers help the needy elderly than any other disadvantaged group (Ferris, 1984; Perry, 1983; Taylor & Chatters, 1986; Vinokur-Kaplan, Cibulski, Spiro & Bergman, 1984). The research question is what range
of activities and target population are covered by volunteers in coprovision of welfare services in Israel.

Management of Volunteers

Ellis (1985) noted that, although society has always had volunteers, volunteer program management is less than 20 years old. Pierucci and Noel (1980) and Turner (1972) found that situational variables are relatively more important than personal variables in determining volunteer retention and commitment. Thus the management of volunteers takes an added importance. The management of volunteer programs can be divided into two major elements: (a) recruitment and administration, and (b) professional support. The first deals with attracting new volunteers and assuring compliance with administrative regulations; the latter assures the most effective use of volunteers over time. This distinction is also evident from studies which note that a person's motives in becoming a volunteer may differ considerably from the motives that cause him/her to remain in volunteer work (Gidron, 1984; McPherson & Lockwood, 1980; Rubin & Thorelli, 1984).

The first element in volunteer management programs refers to recruitment, orientation, supervision, protection of volunteers' rights, and maintenance of records of volunteer activities. A Gallup study of volunteers in general revealed that volunteers frequently learn about local volunteer opportunities through informal networks (Gallup Organization, Inc., 1982). Recruitment of volunteers by word-of-mouth is clearly undesirable and costly as many appropriate volunteers are not recruited as their knowledge of the program is limited. Lafata (1980) suggested a variety of methods such as using informal networks or the mass media to recruit volunteers. Christianson (1986) reported one successful recruiting effort that used clients' relatives and retired employees as volunteers in social services that assisted unattractive client groups. Blumenfield and Rocklin (1980) provided an extensive list of recruitment options which will be utilized in this paper.

Recruitment is also associated with screening. This is often a sensitive issue, as screening may discourage people from volunteering when they are threatened with a possible rejection.
Nevertheless, not all volunteers are appropriate to all agencies (Ellis, 1985). Scott and Sontheimer (1985) suggested that most inappropriate volunteers withdraw by their own volition. However, should it be necessary to reject a volunteer, the agency should advise the person of the reason for the rejection and refer him/her to another agency. Salmon (1985) and Pierucci and Noel (1980) argued that, once volunteers are available, the agency should orient them in the actual service setting. Orientation may include verbal presentations, tours of the agency, meeting with clients, meeting with staff members, and receiving manuals and all written information about the agency and the volunteer's expected role. Lafata (1980) and Sainer and Zander (1971) emphasized the importance of routinely recording activities performed by volunteers. Reimbursing volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses can be an important factor in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Finally, there is the issue of who is responsible for the volunteers? Is it a special person, i.e., volunteer coordinator, or is it any agency employee chosen at random to coordinate volunteers? The former indicates greater agency concern for volunteers than does the latter — *ceteris paribus*. Other important issues which are not covered by this study are contracting with volunteers and termination of the volunteer's work.

The second element in volunteer management concerns activities designed to increase job satisfaction, provide intrinsic rewards, and enhance organizational commitment. Gidron (1984) found that, of the four intrinsic variables associated with retention vs. turnover, three — task achievement, task identity, and social contact — were considered important by Israeli volunteers. The fourth variable, preparation, i.e., supervision and orientation, was not considered as important. Daily (1986) found that the four best predictors of organizational commitment among volunteers are: job satisfaction (i.e., task significance, skill variety, and task identity), work autonomy, feedback, and feeling of achievement. The volunteers' commitment is also expected to increase when their work receives recognition, such as certificates, ceremonies, verbal acknowledgements, and symbolic rewards (Gidron, 1984; Salmon, 1985; McClam & Spicuzza, 1983). The professional management of volunteers also includes
the careful matching of volunteers with clients or activities (Sainer & Zander, 1971; Salmon, 1985; Miller, 1985).

In summary, the management of volunteer programs, although a new field, requires competence in recruiting and retaining volunteers. The relevant research question is what is done by LDSSs to maintain coprovision.

**Professional Training**

According to Israeli regulations, most service providers in LDSSs are social workers. Scheier (1977) argued that professional staff do not support volunteers. Feinstein and Cavanaugh (1976) added that most professionals are neither equipped nor willing to deal with volunteers. Haeuser and Schwartz (1980) and Demoll (1983) attributed this nonsupport to professional training that fails to value volunteerism and therefore fails to teach skills in using volunteers.

Not surprisingly, Stubblefield and Miles (1986) found that 32.6% of the volunteer coordinators have an educational level of less than a baccalaureate degree, while an additional 38.6% have only a baccalaureate degree. The authors found that only about 30% of the volunteers coordinators indicated that they had completed the Association of Volunteer Administration (AVA) certification requirements or were working toward completion. Thus, the relevant research question is to what extent are the social workers and volunteer coordinators qualified to manage and utilize volunteers? An additional question is what are the attitudes of both social workers and volunteer coordinators towards the use of volunteers in the LDSSs.

**The Use of Volunteers in Israel**

Israeli law requires that each municipality establish a local department of social services (LDSSs). The LDSSs are supervised and financed to a large extent by the Israeli central government through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Although the LDSSs are public agencies, there is strong emphasis on the use of volunteers to complement the work of professional social workers, i.e., coprovision.
The Ministry of Labour and Social Services, although a formal government organization, encourages community development and coproduction. For example, as early as 1953, the Ministry initiated a Department for Community Organization. This department finances the salaries and trains more than 90% of the community organizers in Israel who are employed by LDSSs (Cnaan, 1987). In the mid 1970's, the Ministry established a Department of Volunteerism. The department has the responsibility of encouraging and monitoring volunteers employed by LDSSs. Regional supervisors of the department have the task of ensuring that an increasing number of LDSS activities are performed by volunteers.

Official statistics of the Department of Volunteerism indicate a wide use of volunteers. In 1977, LDSSs in Israel had 1,743 volunteers (Orlev, 1978); in 1983, 10,066 volunteers, i.e., nearly a ten-fold increase (Jano, 1984). However this growth in the number of volunteers may not necessarily indicate that volunteers are used wisely and effectively by LDSSs. It is possible that the new national department did not effect any real change in the use of volunteers by LDSSs.

No other chain of social service agencies in Israel, whether private, voluntary, or governmental, uses as many volunteers as the LDSSs. However, their client population, which is among the neediest, is often the least attractive to volunteers. Were volunteer action to be ranked on a continuum of status and power ranging from leading nonprofit organizations to informal local help, LDSS volunteers would be ranked near the latter. They are what Kelley and Kelley (1985) called the "agency volunteers". Using Lauffer and Gorodezky's (1977) typology of volunteer activity, these volunteers are primarily engaged in direct practice.

In Israel there are a few programs that offer courses on the use of volunteers, and these are available to social workers. The Department of Volunteerism provides one program through the Institute for Training of Social Workers. This is a free annual one-day-a-week course designed for those who work with volunteers in LDSSs. York (1987) reported a few courses for volunteer coordinators that are presented in a university. These courses which attract mostly those with little academic education, are geared towards paraprofessionals. Two schools of
social work offer courses in volunteerism. In one school (the smallest in Israel) the course is required. The other school offers the course as an elective. The Schwartz Program which trains managers for community centers and is under the auspices of the Hebrew University (Gidron & Levy, 1980) offers a course in volunteerism, although graduates of this program are not likely to work in LDSS. The relevant research question is how many social workers who interact with LDSS volunteers completed either of these, or other, courses on the use of volunteers?

Major studies on volunteers in Israel have focused on the attractive, middle-class oriented agencies. For example, there have been studies of the effectiveness of an oldster to oldster program carried out by the Israeli Social Security Administration (Vinokur-Kaplan, Cibulski, Spiro, & Bergman, 1981) and of the retention and turnover of volunteers in three Israeli Community Centers (Gidron, 1984). One study surveyed members of various voluntary organizations to determine who volunteers were, and why (Peres & Lyn, 1975). Yet, volunteer work in LDSSs, Israel's most significant social service organization, has never been examined from the perspective of the LDSSs themselves.

Study Design

Method

The data presented in this paper were taken from a larger study of the structure and functions of LDSSs in Israel (Cnaan, Korazim, Meller, & Rosenfeld, 1988). A random stratified cluster sample was used to select 14 LDSSs from Israel's central region. All 14 selected LDSSs agreed to participate. They represent the range of small LDSSs (those with 14 social work positions or less) as one stratum and large LDSSs (those with 21 social work positions or over) as the other stratum.

The study was the focus of an advanced research seminar. Each of the 14 students in the seminar was assigned to collect data in a specific LDSS. On the average, the students visited the LDSSs 12 times. Information was collected through interviews, observations, and recorded analysis. The data were gathered in late 1984 over a four month period. One of the major areas
of study in this research was the management of volunteers by LDSSs. The individuals interviewed on each LDSS for this study were one volunteer coordinator, or in the absence of such a position, the LDSS manager, and three social workers. It should be noted that community organizers in the LDSSs were not interviewed. Thus the data may not provide understanding of the use of volunteers in locality development and citizen representation.

**Instrument**

Most data were collected through interviews. The instrument was a questionnaire which consisted of the following sections: (a) socio-economic background of the subject, (b) background information regarding the specific LDSS, (c) number of volunteers, (d) background characteristics of volunteers, (e) recruitment, (f) activities performed by volunteers, (g) populations cared for by volunteers, (h) LDSS's activities to sustain volunteers, and (i) satisfaction with volunteers and future plans.

In some instances, additional data were added through analyses of records and nonparticipant observations. Since these data were available only in some LDSSs and were not uniform, they were not analyzed. These data however were useful in validating data from the questionnaires and helped in interpreting data when subjects in one LDSS made contradictory statements.

**Findings**

Each of the 14 LDSSs in the study uses volunteers. The mean number of volunteers per LDSS is about 200. The range is between 30 and 600. Approximately one third are ad hoc volunteers. In one LDSS, 500 volunteers are used once a year for an ad hoc activity. While only three LDSSs do not use ad hoc volunteers, all LDSSs regularly use volunteers who serve at least one hour biweekly. The remaining findings are grouped under five major headings. All but the last (Satisfaction of Staff and Plans Regarding Volunteers) correspond to the headings of the literature review section.
Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Volunteers

Interviewees were asked to rate which of four sociodemographic characteristics represented the mode (highest frequency) in their assigned LDSS (Table 1). Not surprisingly, most volunteers were women. This overrepresentation of women was also found by Gidron (1984) among volunteers in Israeli Community Centers. In 11 LDSSs, there were more women volunteers; in 3 LDSS, men and women were equally represented among volunteers, most of whom were under 20 years of age. These young volunteers were generally high school students or members of youth organizations such as scout groups. Six LDSSs had primarily young volunteers; five had old volunteers. Among the latter, most volunteers in two LDSSs were 41 years and over; in three LDSSs, most were 61 years and over. The other LDSSs were reported as using equal numbers of young ( < 20) and old (61 > ) volunteers. In other words, no LDSS had its largest volunteer representation among those aged 21 to 40 years. These findings are consistent with those of Haeuser and Schwartz (1980) who observed that social work professionals tend to work more effectively with older adults and teenagers. Haeuser and Schwartz claim that this trend stems from a desire for control and the avoidance of a conflict with successful competent adults.

Data regarding education were also affected by age. For example, nine LDSSs reported that the majority of volunteers did not complete high school. However, this is due to the fact that six of these LDSSs used mostly young volunteers, while two other used young and old volunteers equally. When students are considered, education can be equated with the highest grade attainment by age. Under this criterion, most youth volunteers have a high level of education. For 4 of LDSSs, the most frequent level of education among volunteers was 13–15 years (i.e., full of partial undergraduate or professional program); for 2 LDSSs, the most frequent level of education was 16 or more years (i.e., some graduate school). These data indicate that the level of education among older volunteers is equal to or greater than that of the general population but possibly less than that of most social workers.
### Table 1

**Volunteer Functions in LDSSs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lauffer and Gorodezky's typology</th>
<th>Sieder and Kirschbaum's typology</th>
<th>No. of LDSSs in which volunteers perform each function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Reaching out and identifying people in need.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Acting as advocates of the poor and misfortunates</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Protest and public action</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Practice</td>
<td>4. Providing direct services</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>5. Fund raising</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Acting as spokesman for the agency</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reporting/evaluating community reactions to programs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Making</td>
<td>8. Collaboration in community planning activity</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Developing new service delivery system</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Policy making</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was found that the volunteers were mostly high school students in six LDSSs, mostly retirees in three LDSSs, and mostly housewives in two LDSSs. Only one LDSS had volunteers from all these categories as well as working persons. Thus, the data concerning occupation indicated that the majority of volunteers are not in the work force.

Activities Performed by Volunteers

Based on Lauffer and Gorodezky (1977) and Sieder and Kirschbaum (1977) typologies, Table 1 clearly indicates that volunteers in the 14 LDSSs are used primarily for direct service. They are not used in policy making, fund raising, and protest or public action. It should be noted that LDSS staff activity in protest and public action is minimal and under clear guidelines set by the government. In most LDSSs, staff are seldom active in advocacy, administration, and policy making. This indicates that volunteers are expected to supplement the work of professionals, as is expected under the terms of coprovision, but that they are not to be involved in activities that are prohibited to staff members.

In dealing with the most frequent volunteer activity — direct service and the LDSS populations served — it is clear that most LDSS use volunteers to assist the elderly (eleven out of fourteen). The LDSSs populations least served by the volunteers are families in need and the handicapped (four and three LDSSs respectively). Other client groups served by volunteers in 8 of the 14 LDSSs were mentally retarded, sick people, and children and youth. The number of volunteers active in each client category may vary among LDSSs due to the extreme variations in size (i.e., personnel and population served) among the 14 LDSSs. However, the areas in which volunteers are used also vary among the LDSSs. The decision to use volunteers in assisting specific client groups reflects local needs and in some cases, the personal preferences of the volunteer coordinator.

Management of Volunteers

As indicated in the literature review, management of volunteers has two aspects: recruitment and administration, and
professional support. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the extent of these activities in the 14 LDSSs in the study. Interviewees were asked to rate the extent to which the LDSS performed each activity listed in the tables. An LDSS was rated as active if three out of four interviewees considered it as "performing this activity to a large extent."

Five areas of administrative activities were studied. All LDSSs used recruitment methods. Those most frequently used were contacting local clubs and groups and informal networking; the least frequent was the use of public media and the telephone. Only eight LDSSs screened volunteers and the only reported method was an interview. Among those who reported no screening of volunteers, the informal judgement of the social workers was the only criterion used to refuse a volunteer. All 14 LDSSs provided supervision, but only 6 provided individual case supervision, whereas the rest provided group supervision. Fifty percent of LDSSs provided initial orientation to the agency. As to administration, most departments kept records of the volunteers and their activities. Ten LDSSs reimbursed out-of-pocket expenses and one even provided some payments to volunteers. Seven LDSSs allocated special social workers to coordinate volunteers. With one exception, these were usually large LDSSs. Thus it can be concluded that, when size permits, one professional is generally assigned the role of coordinating the volunteers with the responsibility of recruitment, orientation and supervision (see Table 2).

As Table 3 indicates, professional support (retention and organizational commitment) for LDSS volunteers received less attention than did administrative functions. The two support areas in which theory and practice differed most widely was in activities aimed at personal growth. Less than 50% of the LDSSs were concerned with task variety, task significance, autonomy, feedback, and educational growth for volunteers. The only exception was task identity which was a concern of nine LDSSs. It is important to note that neither size nor a volunteer coordinator were associated with job satisfaction and personal growth of volunteers. Most LDSSs attempt to match volunteers with clients on the basis of language similarities and clients' needs. The volunteers’ interests and skills play an important
Table 2

*Adapted from Blumenfield & Rocklin (1980).
**All 14 LDSSs provided supervision: The difference is in type of supervision.
Table 3

**Number of LDSSs Actively Involved in Support Programs for Volunteers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Sub-Activity</th>
<th>No. of Active LDSSs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Thank-you letters</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certificates of appreciation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trips</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prizes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceremonies</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parties</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day Conferences</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching clients with</td>
<td>Matching by language</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteers</td>
<td>Matching by volunteer's interests</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matching by volunteer's skills</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matching by client's needs</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging personal</td>
<td>Report to volunteer on client's</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth</td>
<td>progress (feedback)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide supervision per-case</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Educational growth)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delegate responsibility of case to</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>volunteers (autonomy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt to find challenging tasks for</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>volunteers (task significance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt to find interesting tasks for</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>volunteers (task variety)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt to provide volunteers with</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>variety of activities (task variety)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt to enable volunteers to work</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with family until the termination of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>treatment (task identity)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging social</td>
<td>Consider volunteers as part of</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contacts</td>
<td>professional team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage volunteers to meet</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
role only in nine LDSSs. All LDSSs have at least one method of recognizing volunteers and ten have at least two or more. Ten LDSSs encourage volunteers to meet as a group and to support one another. Only six LDSSs consider volunteers as part of the professional team.

**Professional Training**

None of the 42 social workers who were interviewed had any formal training in work with volunteers. These findings are of special importance in the six LDSSs in which the social workers supervise individual volunteers. The situation is somewhat different with regard to volunteer coordinators. The seven volunteer coordinators and three others who had this responsibility in addition to other duties had completed a special course provided by the Department of Volunteerism in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Trained in this field, they also received supervision and support from the department's inspectors/supervisors. This training seems exclusive, however, to the level of volunteer coordinators and does not extend to line workers.

**Staff Satisfaction and Plans**

As part of the interview, the social workers and volunteer coordinators were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of using volunteers and about future plans in regard to volunteers. Interviewees were first asked to rate their agreement with statements regarding volunteer work in LDSS based on their experience. The rankings were scaled from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). They were then asked to add new ideas or their plans regarding the use of volunteers. The results of the close-ended questions are presented in Table 4.

As in the findings regarding training, there was a two-tiered perspective in staff satisfaction with volunteers. The volunteer coordinators were more enthusiastic about the effectiveness of volunteers. The social workers who work directly with the volunteers reported lower levels of satisfaction with "professional time saved" and "activities performed by volunteers instead of the professionals" than did the volunteer coordinators. The
social workers' overall satisfaction with volunteers was relatively low. However, both groups agreed that the LDSSs need more volunteers and should invest time and concern in them, even though volunteers will not replace professionals.

Table 4

_Evaluation of Volunteers Work by Social Workers and Volunteer Coordinators in LDSSs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Social Workers</th>
<th>Volunteer Coordinators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction from working with volunteers**</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with volunteers saves professional's time**</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers mostly supplement professionals but not replace them</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social workers have to invest a great deal of time in training volunteers to be effective</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers do what social workers should but cannot do because of constraints**</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LDSS need more volunteers</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The reported data are presented as the means of each group on each issue of evaluation. The range is between strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5).

**Denotes significant differences between social workers and coordinators at the .05 level while utilizing a t-test statistic.

This two-tiered professional view was also evident in the responses to open-ended questions on future plans for the use of volunteers. All of the 14 interviewees who served as volunteer coordinators mentioned some plans, but only 2 of the 42 social workers did so. The issue, obviously, was of far greater importance to the coordinators than to the social workers. The issues raised most frequently by the coordinators were: recruitment of new volunteers (9), the use of clients as volunteers (5), training in volunteer coordination (4), new recognition mecha-
nisms (4), reimbursement and payment for volunteers (3), and helping social workers to use volunteers more effectively (3).

Summary and Conclusions

It is evident that governmental social services in most modern societies are moving toward an extensive use of volunteers (Ellis, 1985). Whether the motivating factor is traditional community structure (Barclay Report, 1982), the advantages of volunteers as informal links to community (Kelley & Kelley, 1985), the financial saving (Ferris, 1984; Roter, Shamai, & Wood, 1985; Salamon, Musselwhite, & Abramson, 1984), or any combination of these is immaterial. The question is how best to enhance co-provision in social services.

The findings indicate several issues of significant importance. Analyses of the four sociodemographic variables considered in the study indicate that LDSS volunteers most frequently come from subpopulations that are less powerful compared with the general population. Specifically, most of the volunteers are under 20 or over 60 years of age, women, less educated than the social workers, and unemployed. Though people with these characteristics may have the free time to give volunteer work and may reap personal satisfaction from their involvement, another possibility is that social workers, in their selection process, may view these volunteers as a group that is amenable to control. Thus, social workers may prefer to recruit them rather than others. Further studies should investigate the methods by which social workers select volunteers and the role that control and power play in the process.

It was found that LDSS volunteers were used primarily in direct service with the elderly, sick, mentally retarded, children, and youths. Since social workers in the LDSSs are seldom involved in policy making, administration, or advocacy, the use of volunteers in direct service may indicate the agency's perceived mission rather than an attempt to downplay the role of volunteers. That volunteers are seldom used to assist families in need may be due to professional insecurity. A few researchers noted that professionals tend to protect their domain from being taken over by volunteers as to secure their sense of professionalism (Demoll, 1983; Kulys & Davis, 1986; Mitchell, 1986). It is
suggested that this issue merits further in-depth investigation both from the standpoint of volunteers and social workers.

The administration and recruitment aspects of volunteer coordination appear satisfactory, since each LDSS has an average of 200 volunteers, two thirds of whom serve on a long-term basis. Less satisfactory is the attention given to the volunteers’ personal growth, and use of skills and interests. This raises an issue that deserves further discussion and clarification, namely, are volunteers primarily a tool to assist clients (i.e., a resource to be used), which is the essence of coproduction, or are volunteers themselves a target population (i.e., people who merit professional care and investment?). While there is no evident either/or solution, the question is a challenging one for many social service professionals.

The relationship between formal training in volunteer coordination and the degree to which volunteer work is appreciated is yet another issue. Findings in this study indicate that coordinators value volunteer work far more than do the line social workers. The question is whether this difference in perception stems from formal training in volunteer coordination, differences in administrative responsibilities, or from the direct interactions of social workers with volunteers. This issue also merits further investigation.

The findings reported here are from the first study ever to consider the role of volunteers in the LDSSs: Israel’s major source of social services and its major user of volunteers. Obviously, many issues of interest were beyond the scope of this exploratory study. It is the hope of the author that many more studies of issues related to coproduction in social services will follow.

References


The Use of Volunteers by Governmental Social Services in Israel


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Recent Work on African-American Studies in  
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