December 1997

Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 1997)

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The JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WELFARE is edited and published by the SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, 1201 Oliver Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49008.

JSSW is sponsored jointly by Western Michigan University, the College of Health and Human Services, and School of Social Work.
The substantial support of Louisiana State University in the publication of the journal is gratefully acknowledged.

Editor: Robert D. Leighninger, Jr.
Managing Editor: Frederick McDaniel
Associate Editor: Steven R. Rose


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The Biography of a Scale: Contextual Factors That Influence the Measurement of Family Functioning

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The subject of instrument relevance is addressed by examining issues that have arisen in the use of a single scale over a forty year period. The issues revolve around the impact of varying social conditions, changing ethos, differential respondent receptiveness, and evolving research technology. Extended use of an instrument, it is argued, yields information that transcends the conventional techniques for testing instrument adequacy. The lack of opportunities in social work for accessing information on extended use of measurement tools is due, among other factors, to a preoccupation with working on subjects that are new and original and to a lack of coordination among research endeavors.

In my work as a researcher and instructor of social work students I have often been asked whether certain instruments of social measurement should or should not be used. When coming from someone who has just completed an introductory course, the inquiry usually focuses on the reliability and validity of an instrument. That is, does the instrument have the capacity to measure relevantly and consistently the subject it set out to measure. What is often forgotten in this search for "perfect instruments" is the fact that available indices of reliability and validity are context specific. They yield evidence on instrument quality relative to given populations, social conditions, economic circumstances, and environmental factors.

The judicious advice to the prospective user of an instrument is generally to test independently for reliability and validity. This is more easily said than done, given the large investment in time.
and resources in creating a useful instrument in the first place. The less desirable alternative is to justify the use of an existing tool relative to its prior performance in other, hopefully similar, contexts. Taking this route leaves unresolved the question of suitability of the instrument for the study at hand.

The present essay addresses the issue of instrument relevance from a descriptive, historical perspective by focusing on a single instrument that has been in use for nearly four decades. The goal is to illustrate the emergence of problems arising from changes in the social context and how these changes necessitate periodic revisions to assure continued instrument relevance over time and space. One of the assumptions underlying this approach is that problems exemplified by the longitudinal case approach parallel essentially the type of issues the researcher encounters in different settings at any one point in time. The single case analysis has the advantage of conveying the issues descriptively, thereby making them available to social work journal readers, perhaps a majority of them, who eschew writings employing quantitative analysis. I am assuming furthermore that the subject of instrument relevance for assessing social work intervention is significant not only to the researcher but also to every practitioner with an interest in service effectiveness.

The Family Functioning Scale as a Case Example

One’s ability to view an instrument from a long term perspective presupposes that the instrument has been around and used for an extended period of time. Social work measurement tools, by and large, have a short tenure. The reason for this is the general absence of empirical research by the field of practice (Task Force on Social Work Research, 1992, pp.1–16). Questionnaires, scales, schedules, and related forms of data collection, more often than not, are produced in academic settings or under academic sponsorship and are used in specially financed projects (grants from federal or regional authorities and private foundations). In the absence of replication research in social work, which is not favored by sponsors, research instruments enjoy limited, spotty use in additional studies—often in pursuit of someone’s advanced degree—but are not embraced by the field of practice in the quest for empirical knowledge.
The Family Functioning Scale, also known as the St. Paul Scale of Family Functioning, was developed in 1958 (Geismar and Ayres, 1959; 1960) in an effort to assess changes in the performance of psychosocial roles of dysfunctional families who received family centered treatment in St. Paul, Minnesota (Overton and Tinker and Associates, 1957). The instrument has undergone several revisions, the most recent dated 1993 (Geismar and Camasso, 1993). A review of the literature in the mid 1950s on family measurement of treatment outcome revealed few endeavors relevant to the task at hand. The single social work focused instrument with acceptable reliability and validity was the Hunt-Kogan Scale (1950) developed by researchers of the Community Service Society of New York. That scale, however, measured change in individuals rather than families, and family assessment, to the extent that it was carried out at all, required aggregating the scores of individual family members.

The theoretical approach to the family centered project, however, postulated that the family is not merely an aggregate of individuals but an entity which needs to be conceptualized as a social system (the time was the mid 1950s). Its components are social roles and social functions which tend to revolve around socially expected goals of family members. Given this framework it was possible to evaluate family roles and functions by the degree to which they make for the well-being of individual family members, the family as a group, and the surrounding community.

It required a two year effort to translate the concepts into concrete indices of behavior, a process known to researchers as operationalizing. The latter took two forms: 1. spelling out what behaviors are comprised under family roles and functions and 2. delimiting the degree to which these behaviors are in line with or contrary to family and societal well-being.

The Family Functioning Scale was a joint effort of caseworkers and researchers, based on theoretical formulations that guided the day-by-day operations of the practitioner. The Scale was therefore not a product superimposed from the outside but an instrument that utilized, with minor modifications, the thinking and language of the caseworker in the field.
Instrument Format

Given the perspective of the Project's casework in the 1950s, information grouped in nine areas (and 27 sub-categories) of family functioning was collected by means of open-ended interviewing. The areas represented essentially three spheres of behavior: individual and role functioning, expressive functioning (focusing on interpersonal relationships) and instrumental functioning (mainly concerned with maintaining the family as a physical system by providing income, housing and health services).

The narrative of documented social functioning, the product of the interview, was rated against three basic criteria of adequacy. Was the functioning conducive to individual and family well-being, was it in line with social expectations including laws and mores of the community, and did it generate personal satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment? (for more detail see Geismar 1971).

The first version of the Family Functioning Scale was a summated rating scale, meaning a scale composed of a number of items whose values are summed to yield a single score. The open-ended interview approach was chosen to maximize respondents' motivation to talk about what for most of them represented a sensitive subject. From the very beginning the investigators took it upon themselves to address questions of reliability and validity. The first was dealt with by means of test-retest procedure, a comparison of independent ratings of interviews (Geismar and Ayres, 1959); the second was investigated with the aid of Guttman scaling (Geismar, La Sorte, and Ayres, 1962), a method that seeks to ascertain the interrelationship of scale categories by their adherence to a model of unidimensional scaling.

The attainment of satisfactory results in these tests did not make the Family Functioning Scale a universal tool. Issues arose in subsequent applications that brought into question the appropriateness of the original instrument at different times and in different settings. The issues were not necessarily related to flagging results in quantitative measures of reliability and validity. More often than not they arose in anticipation of problems tentatively identified in interviews with respondents, discussion with new research collaborators, and exposure to the new literature dealing with practice theory as well as research methodology. The present
paper presents a sampling of situations that brought to the fore the need to modify the instrument under consideration. They are discussed under the heading of varying social conditions, change in ethos, differential respondent receptiveness, and change in research technology.

Varying Social Conditions

Social measurement is by definition contextual. It does not occur in a vacuum but assigns a value to a given phenomenon, a type of behavior, an act, a transaction, an experience, an attitude, an emotional response, etc. in the context of norms for each phenomenon to be measured.

Measurement of family functioning is normative in the sense that different types of functioning conceptualized by the scale need to be evaluated by the standards of adequacy detailed above. While scale building of this nature cannot proceed without some generalizing about group norms, variations in such norms, nonetheless, occur from place to place and over time, making it necessary to carry out scale revisions.

In the case of the Family Functioning Scale we discovered, for example, that housing adequacy in the United States included among other factors ample bedroom accommodations for all family members, in spaces separated from daytime quarters. Our research in Sweden, by contrast, showed a lesser concern with separate spaces, given the acute housing shortage in urban areas at the time of the study. By contrast, Sweden put a greater emphasis than did the United States on adherence to building codes. Lower adequacy ratings in Sweden would more likely indicate residence in sub-standard housing while in the American research a reduced housing score was more apt to be accounted for by crowded housing conditions.

Another contrast affecting the two countries—at least in the 1960s and before the American thrust to combat child abuse—was the use of physical force to control child behavior. Swedish legislation drew a clear line, banning physical punishment of children. The United States, by contrast, has been slow in evolving a code that will limit the physical punishment of children. Inevitably ratings of child care in the two countries had to take
into account the legislative provisions as well as the prevalent norms of behavior at specified points in time.

Changing Ethos

In the mid-1950s when we began formulating the scale categories and scale items, out-of-wedlock births, though on the increase, carried considerable social stigma in the eyes of society as a whole as well as the agencies rendering services. In our assessment of social functioning the issue was not so much the weighing of the moral meaning of having children out-of-wedlock as assessing the social consequences of having a child viewed as illegitimate. For that reason raters were instructed to assign values “below adequate” to extra-nuptial motherhood.

In the wake of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, which had a far reaching effect on attitudes and norms of conduct, having a child out-of-wedlock was no longer seen as clearly deviant behavior, having lost the stigma attached to it in earlier decades. It seemed logical, therefore, to assess out-of-wedlock motherhood as less than adequate only in situations where it gave rise to community opposition that had a negative impact on child rearing and other aspects of family life. Again it must be noted that under the system of evaluation used, a given act or form of behavior had meaning chiefly in relation to the prevailing community norms, and this consideration shaped the ratings given to that behavior.

A similar case can be made for other non-traditional family forms such as open marriage (allowing for extra-marital liaisons) and gay marriages both of which can be evaluated only in the context of their acceptance, or rejection, by the surrounding community and the consequences attendant upon one or the other.

Differential Respondent Receptiveness

Respondent receptiveness to study participation is a key consideration in the data collection process. Researchers who are planning to gather data are generally satisfied with a pilot study that furnishes evidence of respondents’ willingness to cooperate and provide the type of data sought by the investigator. Yet, examples abound of data collection having gone awry because
Family Functioning

changes, often minor, in type of respondents, social situation, political and economic atmosphere, interfered with obtaining the information needed for the study. The Family Functioning Scale was developed for use with clients who were given intensive family-centered services by professionally trained social workers. The semi-structured scale format, which encouraged an open-ended response, was uniquely appropriate for respondents with whom a relationship has already been established and who saw the interview as part of a helping process.

As the research expanded to include families in control and comparison groups as well as randomly selected families in a variety of social and cultural settings, it became necessary to make adjustments in the process of data gathering to achieve a measure of respondent motivation similar to that obtained from clients in service setting. In the Family Life Improvement Project (1964–1969) which encompassed 272 treatment and 283 control cases, the latter received payment for each interview. They were also given a full explanation of the purpose of the study and a promise—which was fulfilled—of having the project share the research findings (Geismar 1973).

In an Australian study comprising samples of native families and immigrant families of European and Middle Eastern origin, motivation for participation, in addition to payment, included endorsement of the study by local public school systems and ethnic associations (Geismar and Geismar, 1979).

A different situation presented itself when interviewing (as part of a validity study) professional social workers for information about the social functioning of their clients (Geismar, Lagay, Niv, and Landau, 1986). The workers who shared an interest in the study results had no problem completing an 18 page checklist of scale items (Geismar and Camasso, 1993, pp.163–181). This contrasted favorably with the reaction of social work clients who responded positively to open-ended questions but often resisted interviews framed in a closed-ended format, which they found tiring.

Topic sensitivity is, of course, a major concern to all scale developers. A decision, whether given topics considered sensitive can be included, must be made in the pilot phase and pretest of the study. Yet a finding of subject suitability based on valid responses
from a one test population may not be applicable to a similar
group of respondents, for reasons that are hard to predict. As an
eexample we cite the differential response of sample populations to
questions, under the heading of marital relationship, about the na-
ture of sexual relations between partners (Geismar and Camasso,
1993, p.55). In our studies in the United States, Canada, Australia,
and Sweden, we encountered occasionally resistance on the part
of a respondent but not of a scope where we had to delete the
subject entirely. The exception was a sample sub-population in an
Australian study composed of Turkish immigrants. Vocal objec-
tions were raised by the translators and interviewers in this study
who considered the inclusion of sexual content to be culturally
 taboo. We had to accept their judgment because lack of familiarity
with language and culture left us no alternative but to omit the
questionnaire segment to which objections had been raised.

Changes in Research Technology and the
Quest for More Efficient Data Processing

During the mid-1950s when we first aggregated field data on
the social functioning of multi-problem families we relied heavily
on non-parametric statistical analysis, mindful of small samples
and skewed distributions but also of computational simplicity
inherent in the technique. Computers were only beginning to be
available to social science data processing, but there were few
programs that met our need. Scalogramming (Guttman scaling),
then one of the more sophisticated methods of scale analysis had
to be done manually (Geismar, La Sorte, and Ayres, 1962). We
resorted to multi-dimensional scaling in the form of factor anal-
ysis when appropriate software was developed for mainframe
computers in the late 1960s Geismar, 1973). More recently the
technique for testing reliability and validity received a boost with
the use of structural equation modeling (Camasso and Geismar,

The point being made here is that changing research technol-
ogy affords an opportunity to strengthen measurement by im-
proved ways of handling data. Improvement may be in the nature
of extracting information not heretofore available or processing
the data more efficiently.
Access to more advanced research technology is by itself not a sufficient reason for modifying procedures. The technology has to be fully geared to the methods, goals, and resources of the study. Factor analysis, for example, always impressed us as an effective mode of data reduction. But were hundreds of hours of sitting behind calculators a desirable investment in manpower given the uncertainty of outcomes with varied population samples? Computer software once available made the testing of different factor analytic models a reasonable investment in time and expenditure.

Some changes in research procedure may be entirely unconnected to new research technology but motivated by the discovery, evolving from experimentation, that there are more efficient ways of processing data. For instance the most decisive modification in the use of the Family Functioning Scale occurred as a result of a search for a simplified way of coding narrative information. A twenty page rating guideline, which specified criteria for each main and sub-category, was replaced by a two page form whose criteria were at a higher level of abstraction. The simplified procedure resulted in a saving of time without sacrificing statistical accuracy. The revision eliminated some details of information from the routine statistical analysis without loss of reliability, but this information remained stored in the program for special focus studies and/or utilization by practitioners in the service program.

Comment

This brief case history of the Family Functioning Scale was used as a basis for illustrating some of the common situations in which contextual factors help shape the nature of social and behavioral measurement. What should have become clear is that social scales and related instruments are not tools for all seasons but measures whose utility is constantly being challenged by changes in attitudes, demographic conditions, and social science know-how.

These observations have implications for researchers and students planning to make use of existing instruments of measurement, especially those that have been in circulation a number of years.

Instrument use, as stated earlier requires first and foremost an answer to the questions of reliability and validity. Researchers
tend to express a natural concern for the integrity of the measure and show a justified reluctance to subject it to modifications without further testing. This essay puts on the agenda the more complex issue of instrument relevance in the light of changing conditions. Typically, a research instrument is a one-shot endeavor that gets no further attention from its creators except in cases where they are engaged in longitudinal research or replication studies. In the case study reported here we had a situation where the principal investigators and associates opted to work on instrument development over a period of time.

Extended use of the instrument yielded information that transcends the conventional techniques for testing instrument adequacy focused in time and space. Data that accumulated over three and a half decades yielded a wealth of observations on the impact of social and other environmental factors upon the use of the Family Functioning Scale. These observations, hopefully, will stimulate similar studies in relation to other research tools.

The lack of opportunities for accessing information on extended use of measurement tools is largely due to a preoccupation with working on subjects that are new and original. Replication studies, which are standard procedures in the sciences, are neglected in social work and the social and behavioral sciences in general, where there is no industrial and medical infrastructure that relies on replication for boosting scientific rigor.

In an applied field like social work professional credibility hinges to no small extent on the prevalence of empirical practice research. The near absence of ongoing and coordinated efforts at instrument development presents a special barrier to such research. Efforts to overcome this deficit need to be guided by the recognition that in a clearly delineated field research effort in general and instrument development in particular are not solitary enterprises. Practice problems are shared by large segments of the profession and so should be endeavors aimed at scientific knowledge building.

Such sharing can take many forms, but at the most basic level efforts to assess practice scientifically should be undertaken on a cooperative basis, permitting a comprehensive process of instrument construction involving groups of social agencies and academic institutions on an ongoing basis. Ideally a central research
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body, university or agency based, could serve as an integrator of such efforts. Cooperation in this realm would lead to a pooling of data, enlargement of samples, diversification of research methodology, and ultimately to the attainment of results that will strengthen the empirical knowledge base of the profession

References


Lessons from Yellow Medicine County: Work and Custodial Service at the County Poor Farm, 1889–1935

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Poor farms, which spread to the Midwestern United States in the nineteenth century, were intended to provide work for their residents. Existing literature indicates that the need for work and the ability of residents to work was limited on Midwestern poor farms and that it decreased with time. In the historical case study of a rural Minnesota poor farm presented here, data support contentions of the literature. Between 1889 and 1935, the Yellow Medicine County Poor Farm expanded and modernized the house, while allowing an originally modern farming operation to stagnate. Residents who accounted for most of the occupancy were old, disabled immigrant males, and became more so with time. Thus, the Poor Farm adapted to the problems these residents presented, and moved from a work-providing operation to a custodial facility.

Introduction

Contemporary discussions of welfare issues have emphasized young single mothers. While the children of these mothers have been given verbal support in such discussions, there also seems to have been some agreement that the mothers receiving assistance should work, reviving an old idea. Before 1935, the poor were likely to be single, old, childless men, and indoor relief was often favored over outdoor relief. Though the demographics of and services to the poor were different, work as a cultural value prevailed then as now.
In contemporary attempts to put mothers to work, employment as a value has been found to exceed employment as a possibility (Alter, 1996). In the present study, the data revealed a poor farm which set out to provide work and associated occupational rehabilitation. A small farming operation provided work for but a few people however, and it was allowed to stagnate while the house was developed into a center of living and care. Furthermore, the residents were revealed to be old, poor, foreign-born males, most of whom had worked but who no longer could. Thus, the work ideology failed both for want of work and for the availability of workers. Since the poor farm residents needed care, the living facilities were developed accordingly. Thus, the poor farm became a custodial care facility.

In this paper, a review of related literature is presented first. Then, an overview of the historical sources and inductive research methods is presented. Following the literature and methods, the data and analysis are presented.

Literature Review

In the U.S., indoor relief was established in the major eastern cities in the eighteenth century, but developed slowly through the next century (Trattner, 1994). The Yates Report, a study of poverty in New York State released in 1824, recommended indoor relief. New York enacted a poorhouse law the same year (Trattner, 1994; Katz, 1986). Indoor relief spread to the Midwest before the civil war, where it eventually became quite popular (Katz, 1986).

A preferred form of indoor relief in the Midwest was the poor farm, essentially a farm charged with the job of caring for, and perhaps rehabilitating the poor and infirm. In 1864, Minnesota passed a law which required counties to have poor farms or other substitutes. By 1880, southeastern Minnesota, the area surrounding Minneapolis-St. Paul, saw the establishment of several poor farms. However, poor farms did not reach other counties of Minnesota until very late nineteenth century. Thirty-four of 82 organized Minnesota counties had poor farms by 1900. The subject of this study, Yellow Medicine County in southwest Minnesota, established a Poor Farm in 1889 (McClure, 1968). Southwest Minnesota is part of the Great Plains.
Heady and Tweeten (1963) estimated that there was about one farm worker working an average of 32 hours per week per 65 acres on the Great Plains in 1910, a limited demand for labor on small farming operations. Poor farm residents were also incapable of work because they were old and disabled, and healthy workers might leave to find work elsewhere when they could (Katz, 1986). Nationally, the institutionalized poor were aging (Trattner, 1994). Mechanization of industry and agriculture had displaced the older worker, and by 1900, a Minnesota system of alternative institutions had siphoned off much of the younger population, and an aging, impoverished, disabled population remained (McClure, 1968).

The realities of work and aging came into a sharp focus during the Great Depression. One hundred and fifty miles to the north of Yellow Medicine County, the Cass County North Dakota board members voted to support the Townsend movement to deal with their burgeoning elderly poor farm population (Hoffbeck, 1992). Under the spur of federal legislation, Minnesota adopted an old age assistance program in 1935, and poor farms began to close. Yellow Medicine County Poor Farm officially closed in 1936 (McClure, 1968).

Research Methods and Data Sources

The research described here was based largely on the records of the Yellow Medicine County Poor Farm. For this research, the Poor Farm register was primary. This register and other records of the Poor Farm were preserved at the state historical society center at Southwest State University. Residents were listed yearly in the register, and several characteristics of each resident were recorded. Included were the gender, age, occupation, marital status, place of birth, a health rating, the presumed causes of pauperism, and the dates of admission and discharge or death.

From the register, it was possible to estimate the length of time residents spent at the Poor Farm. This was not a perfect procedure. Missing data on the short term residents led to estimates of about a year—that is they were recorded in one year but not the next. This might have inflated occupancy estimates for short term residents. Similar names, misspellings, and duplication of entries also created some difficulty counting residents.
Other important documents for this research were the inventories and bills of sale, which recorded the property of the Poor Farm. Superintendents of the Poor Farm kept a "running inventory" in a small notebook. Regular inventories were also taken, and a sale bill for the 1935 auction of the Poor Farm equipment and furnishings provided a detailed view of the material artifacts. In addition to written records, the author visited the Poor Farm, now privately owned by a family with roots in the area. The woman, who along with her husband first occupied the Poor Farm after it closed, was interviewed. These visits were vital to the conclusions described here.

The use of historical records was necessarily inductive. As such this analysis was, no doubt, a mixture of facts and the author's predispositions. These predispositions were shaped by the author's early life on a subsistence farm in northern Minnesota. On that farm, poverty had kept technology at the 1900 level. So, the Poor Farm records described tools and machinery that had been intimately familiar to this writer.

County Population and Farm Labor

Southwest Minnesota was largely a treeless prairie when Europeans arrived in the nineteenth century. Wooded areas were found mostly along deep river valleys, like that of the Yellow Medicine River, on which the Poor Farm was located. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Swedish, German and Icelandic people immigrated to Yellow Medicine County. The largest group of immigrants, Norwegians, soon outnumbered the original Yankee settlers and the small band of Dakota Indians who lived in the County. The townships of the County were 50–75% Norwegian by 1905 (Holmquist, 1981).

Males outnumbered females in Yellow Medicine County throughout the period studied. The sex ratio was nearly even among the native born population, but there were four foreign born males for every three foreign born females in 1890 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1892, 1913, 1933, 1978, 1992). Since males tended to outlive females in those days, and because the immigrant cultural groups tended toward endogamy, it follows that some elderly foreign born males would not have married and
would eventually have been at risk of isolation from family and in need of assistance.

The farm labor needs in Yellow Medicine County were also suggested by the census. The census of 1890 indicated there was an average of 5.4 persons per family in Yellow Medicine County, and 80% of the families were farm families. Age data indicated that over half of the population in the County was under the age of 20, so one or two family members were probably too young to provide much help (United States Bureau of the Census, 1892; Heady & Tweeten, 1963). Half of the remaining family members would have been female, leaving about one or two male workers per farm. Work was not always neatly divided by gender; Norwegian women contributed substantially to outdoor work (Neth, 1994). Furthermore, hired hands were rare, making up 5–8% of the workers on the Great Plains in the 1850–1890 period (Heady & Tweeten, 1963). Thus, three farm hands at most would have been needed on a 200-acre farm. The 160-acre Poor Farm would not have needed much more than two able-bodied farm hands.

The Poor Farm Operation

The Yellow Medicine County Poor Farm buildings, a few of which still stand today, were at the north end of one of the Farm’s two eighty acre plots, on the brink of a river bank. The barn, with a hay loft and a lean-to on one side, was of conventional size for the era. The two-story house was much larger than most farm houses of the time, however. Other outbuildings included a chicken coop, a granary, a summer kitchen and a storage building.

About 50 acres were fenced for pasture and a large garden plot adjoined the house. Cash crops included oats, barley, and millet. Corn and alfalfa fed the livestock, and potatoes were grown, probably for residents’ consumption. Records from 1900 to 1935 show seven milk cows, two to four draft horses, 50–65 chickens and an assortment of calves, heifers, bulls, steers and pigs.

The Farm machinery was horse drawn throughout the Poor Farm’s existence. The Poor Farm never owned a tractor, even in 1920 when mechanization was reaching other farms in the region. Horse drawn machinery included wagons and a bob sleigh for hauling, as well as machinery for tilling and harvesting.

The Poor Farm’s technology certainly was labor intensive by today’s standards. Hand tools, pitch forks, grain scoops, scythes,
axes and wheelbarrows were kept. So were milk pails for hand-
milking, and cream was separated from the milk with a hand-
cranked cream separator.

It appears that the Poor Farm was equipped with the most
modern machinery when it opened, but that was a time of rapid
advance in farm technology. The records indicated the Poor Farm
did not keep pace with that advance, reporting the same kinds of
equipment in 1935 as they did in 1889. Thus, the work require-
ment of two farm hands persisted throughout the existence of
the Poor Farm. The Poor Farm averaged 10 residents, and the
superintendent his wife and their children made a total of more
than double the six of the typical family farm in the County, so
the amount of farm labor needed from a resident may have been
close to zero.

Living on the Poor Farm

Records indicate that the original house had thirteen rooms.
The central rooms were large by the standards of the time. An
all-season enclosed porch faced the west. The dining room was
large, about 15' x 28'. The living and dining rooms were furnished
with a dining table, and several kitchen and rocking chairs. The
kitchen was about 16' x 16', and included a large hand-built,
metal-covered work table and a large kitchen sink. A coal-burning
kitchen range adjacent to a water tank provided for cooking
and heated the water. Storage jars of various kinds implied food
preparation and preservation. The cooking and canning of food
on a coal burning range would have been sweltering in summer,
and thus the summer kitchen was needed.

Originally, the records indicate eight beds and bedrooms. The
bedrooms were small, probably largely occupied by the bed, and
double pillows suggest that they were double beds. This might
have been occasionally necessary during the early years of the
Poor Farm, before a major addition around 1900. Ten beds were
indicated in 1900, and 13 in 1903. Growth in the number of beds
continued until 1914, when 17 rooms 18 beds were listed. In the
1916 inventory, 15 residents were listed by room, each with a
single room. In 1921, 14 rooms with beds were listed, and two
were indicated as empty. An additional "boys room," perhaps
was occupied by the children of the superintendent since children
were not found among the residents by that date.
As indicated below, many residents were sick or disabled, and must have spent some of their waking time in bed. The steel-frame beds had pillows of tick or straw, and blankets or quilts. Some rooms had lamps and water pails, and all had wash basins and stands, and chamber pots. Others had a dresser, but some had just rungs or hooks for storing clothes. Each room had a window, and some rooms had a chair or rocker.

In the later years, a running water system and a bathroom were added. The water of this part of Minnesota is notoriously "hard," and this probably added to the difficulty of cleaning. “Soft” rainwater collected and stored in barrels or cisterns, may have eased cleaning at the Poor Farm. In the early years, water for clothes washing or bathing was apparently heated in copper boilers on stove tops, and a zinc tub was available for bathing. Washboards were used for hand-rubbing clothing, and hand-cranked clothes wringers were first used, but a clothes washing machine appeared on the latest inventories. Clothes were probably dried on lines outside in the summer, and inside in winter, perhaps in the large furnace-heated basement after the steam furnace replaced the coal burning heaters in 1906. After drying, clothes were probably dampened again and ironed with flat irons, or in the later years at least, with the Farm’s electric irons.

While kerosene and candles were included in the early years, the house was lighted by the self-contained electrical power plant in the later years. Though this system required regular attention to charge batteries with a gasoline engine, it did provide power for household irons, toasters, and radios.

Clearly, by the standards of the day, the Poor Farm was a place where many people could live. The emphasis on household, both in the size of the house and on labor saving devices which eased household tasks, changed with time. This contrasts with the farm operation, which had stagnated at 1900 modernity.

Poor Farm Residents

The Poor Farm residents were different from the people in the surrounding community, and from one another. Most of the analysis presented here compares residents to each other, but the poverty, gender and nativity of the residents are compared to the County population.
Poor Farm and County Residents Compared

There is little doubt the Poor Farm residents were virtually all poor and propertyless. Only about 15 of the 145 residents were said to have property or money, while the rest were said to have none. Across those 15, the following property was noted: Seven houses and seven city lots (some lots specified were apparently vacant lots); five with "some money," of an unspecified amount; a total of 240 acres of land; and, livestock consisting of a cow, a team of horses, and 68 chickens. The residents of the larger County averaged more than 12 times as much land per person, and 274 times the cattle. Poor Farm residents owned none of the various other kinds of farm property, farm machinery for example, that the farmers of the County had (United States Bureau of the Census, 1913).

Table 1 demonstrates that the vulnerability of foreign born males increased over time. Though the sex ratio remained stable in the County population as a whole during the period under study, men were over represented at the Poor Farm. In the County population, the proportion of foreign born persons decreased over time, and was a small proportion by 1930. At the Poor Farm, however, the proportion of foreign born was far greater than would have been expected by chance and remained at a high level.

Comparing the Poor Farm Residents by Time of Occupancy

Assuming the records are inclusive of all residents, 145 people spent time on the Poor Farm. The total occupancy of the Poor Farm was calculated by adding up the years of occupancy for all residents. Total occupancy was about 450 years. This was an average occupancy of about 10 residents at any given time, and a mean stay of about three years.

The time of residents' occupancy varies widely. Five days was the shortest stay, and 32 years the longest. The median time was 12 months, skewed to the short stay side of the mean. Most of the residents, 81 or 56% of the residents, stayed 12 months or less. The remaining portions of the residents were naturally divided between four and five years, with no stays between four and five years, and 32 people on either side of this division. The three resulting groups displayed differing qualities on the recorded variables, as Table 2 indicates.
Table 1

A Comparison of Yellow Medicine County Population and Poor Farm Population by Gender and Nativity, 1888–1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>County Populations</th>
<th>Farm Populations^a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent, number</td>
<td>Percent, number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>foreign born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>(5,264)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>(7,853)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>(8,116)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>(8,698)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>(8,740)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^aThe years for the Poor Farm data refer to the midpoint of the ten year period surrounding the census date, for example 1886 to 1895 for 1890.

Short-staying residents. As can be seen in Table 2, the residents who stayed a year or less accounted for just 37 years of the occupancy of the Poor Farm. Thus, about 8% of the total occupancy was accounted for by this group. This short-staying category was younger, and more likely to be American born. Similarly, they were in better health and were less likely to die than other residents. Those with occupations were less likely than others to be laborers or domestics. They had few recorded causes of pauperism beyond the financial problems which brought them to the Poor Farm.

A case by case examination suggested that the short-staying majority were not without problems. Thirteen of the 81 in this category were elderly. Most of these elderly people also had physical or mental health problems, or were disabled. Four of the 13 elderly ended their short stay in death. The two elderly people without health problems were 73 and 80 years old. Eighteen of the short-stayers were dependent children, less than 12 years of age, two of whom died at the Poor Farm. Three pregnant women, all widowed or single and in their forties, spent seven to eleven months at the Poor Farm. Two women in their 20's,
Table 2

*A Comparison of Length of Occupancy with Other Characteristics of Yellow Medicine County Poor Farm Residents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>One year or less</th>
<th>One year, one month to four years</th>
<th>Five or more years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of occupancy</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (number) foreign born</td>
<td>49% (40)</td>
<td>81% (26)</td>
<td>84% (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (number) widowed, single or divorced</td>
<td>59% (48)</td>
<td>78% (25)</td>
<td>94% (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (number) laborer or domestic</td>
<td>47% (38)</td>
<td>53% (17)</td>
<td>72% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (number) who are dependent children</td>
<td>22% (18)</td>
<td>9% (3)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (number) in good health</td>
<td>36% (29)</td>
<td>19% (6)</td>
<td>25% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (number) with multiple causes of pauperism</td>
<td>17% (14)</td>
<td>63% (20)</td>
<td>84% (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent (number) deaths</td>
<td>10% (8)</td>
<td>38% (12)</td>
<td>47% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median years of age at mid-stay</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

one with a baby, were left without support when their husbands abandoned them. Among the middle-aged short-stayers, there were two deaths. An additional 29 residents entered the Poor Farm injured or ill, and were discharged after a few months, one to a hospital. One middle-aged short-stayer had lost his legs. Three short-stayers had mental problems, recorded as "idiote," [sic] "feeble minded," and insanity. One short-staying resident was a drinker.

The remaining short-stayers, about 11 people, appear to have been without significant problems and did not stay long. Just 1% of the total occupancy, so far as short stayers are concerned, was by residents who may have been functioning at a high level.
Residents with medium-length stays. The medium-stayers were even less functional than the short-stayers. Seven of the 32 medium-stayers were ages 65–74, three of these elderly residents were said to be "feeble minded," and three others were in poor health. Health data was missing on the one remaining 72-year-old. Twelve additional elderly residents were 75 and over, very old by the standards of the day. There were nine deaths among residents over 65. Two medium-stayers were children less than two. Of the middle-aged people in this group, four were said to be feeble minded or, "idiotes" [sic]. One feeble minded person was also said to be crippled; another was blind. All of the remaining people among the medium-stayers had health problems. Three of them died at the poor farm, and four sick residents apparently got well and left. Clearly, the medium-staying group was more debilitated than the short-stayers, and it would be difficult to say that any individual in this category was in a high state of functioning during their Poor Farm stay.

Long-staying residents. Among the 32 people in the long-staying group, there were 20 people older than 65, ten of whom were more than 75. In the 65–74 group there were five with physical disabilities, and one was also blind. Three of the disabled ended their stay in death. Four in this age group were said to be physically feeble. Only one 70-year-old had no recorded health problems. In the 75 and over group, there were two obviously disabled people. All others except one had some recorded health and age related problems.

The middle-aged long-stayers included a variety of disabled and sick. There was one blind resident, and two men had deformed legs, apparently from broken legs which had not healed properly. Six of these long-stayers had multiple problems including apparent mental problems. One of these six was an alcoholic, and two had health problems. One, a woman, was said to be "extravagant," and "too fat." However, she ended her six-year stay in death, suggesting her problems were serious whatever their nature. There were four additional deaths among the middle-aged long stayers. Obviously, those who stayed long at the Poor Farm were aged, losing function, and near death.
Table 2 clearly indicates the strong tendency at the Poor Farm to operate as a home for poor, disabled and aged laborers. More than 70% of the long-staying category were former laborers or domestics, compared to about half of the other residents. The long-staying residents accounted for nearly 75% of the total occupancy, and thus best implied the function of the Poor Farm, namely to care for the poor, disabled and aged laborers, often until they died.

Change Over Time

There was some change of the Poor Farm function with time. Table 3 shows how age changed in the Poor Farm population. At first, the Poor Farm had large numbers of younger residents. After 1904, a smaller number of much older residents stayed for longer periods of time. Table 4 indicates how Poor Farm staff viewed the change in the resident population. Age was given as a "cause of pauperism" in larger proportions of the cases in the later periods. Also more frequently mentioned were various forms of physical disability and being, "feeble minded." The frequency of these perceived characteristics dropped off in the 1925–1935 period, but Table 3 indicates that real age was highest during these years. Perhaps those recording "causes of pauperism" had begun

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number Residents</th>
<th>Mean Months Occupancy/Resident</th>
<th>Mean Resident Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1888–1894</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895–1904</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905–1914</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915–1925</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925–1935</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Occupancy is defined within the time period, and total occupancy/resident may be larger, because some residents had occupancy in multiple periods.
Table 4

Changing Percent (Numbers) of Selected “Causes of Pauperism,” at the Yellow Medicine County Poor Farm over Time, 1888–1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Physical Disability</th>
<th>Feeble Mindedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1888–1894</td>
<td>29%  (11)</td>
<td>8% (3)</td>
<td>3% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895–1904</td>
<td>21%  (10)</td>
<td>11% (5)</td>
<td>11% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905–1914</td>
<td>53%  (20)</td>
<td>21% (8)</td>
<td>18% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915–1925</td>
<td>50%  (12)</td>
<td>29% (7)</td>
<td>33% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925–1935</td>
<td>41%  (11)</td>
<td>18% (5)</td>
<td>22% (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: There is some duplication of “causes” because some residents had occupancy in multiple periods.*

to take age, and mental and physical disability, for granted. Or, perhaps the Great Depression had rendered most elderly people unemployable, and that the elderly people at the Poor Farm were now somewhat healthier despite their age.

**Conclusion**

The primary conclusion of this paper is that the Yellow Medicine County Poor Farm was confronted with realities related to day-to-day needs of the Poor Farm residents, and when County officials responded to those needs, the Poor Farm became a custodial institution. Needs were far more prevalent among elderly and disabled male former laborers than others. Combined with the fact that the Poor Farm operation did not require their work, this suggests that residents did little farm work. Young people, including women and children, did come to the Poor Farm but they seldom stayed long.

The realities of the Poor Farm and the ideology of indoor relief were contradictory. The ideology maintained that the problems of the poor were related to their unwillingness or inability to work. Teach them to work, the ideology said, and the problem would be solved. Most Poor Farm residents having been laborers knew how to work, but illness and disability, as well as age, had reduced their ability to work. Moreover, agriculture was being
mechanized and the demand for labor was falling, and the Great Depression extinguished demand.

Still, the Poor Farm may have set out to rehabilitate the unproductive worker. When the younger residents quickly departed, the superintendents may have counted their successes. However, counting successes by counting cases does not tell us what went on at the Poor Farm most of the time, which is better revealed by accounting for occupancy. Occupancy at the Poor Farm is accounted for by residents who had little ability to work.

A case in point was provided by one of the Poor Farm’s rare alcoholics. In and out of the Poor Farm for a period of 25 years, this resident was “rehabilitated” from the time he was hired to undertake a paint job for the Poor Farm and was hence recorded as occupation “painter.” Still, the alcoholic painter frequented the Poor Farm. After one long absence, he was reported dead, but a superintendent later recorded that he had nonetheless returned! Perhaps this resident, separated from anyone who cared that he worked, lived or died, found the Poor Farm a place where he could be sober, have a work status, and avoid exaggerated reports of death.

However, most Poor Farm residents were confronted with the inevitability of their own decline and death. Officials responded as they could, and perhaps as they thought they should. As the years went by, the County commissioners and Poor Farm superintendents adapted by neglecting the unrealistic agricultural operation, and modernizing and expanding the necessary house. Similarly, Alter’s (1996) findings that work participation of clients is largely unchanged by contemporary efforts suggests that ideology continues be insufficient to the task of rehabilitation. While the demographics and environment of contemporary welfare reform differ from those of the poor farm movement, the lesson from Yellow Medicine County is that the heavy ideological basis of that reform will also have to be adapted to existing social conditions and human needs.

References


The social work profession has played host to a continuing dialogue about the interplay between research and practice. Traditionally, practitioners collect data that have real-world usefulness and are relevant to the intervention process with particular clients. Researchers, on the other hand, are skilled in designing and conducting studies that result in data that can be generalized to build the profession’s foundation of knowledge. Data collection tools and techniques that are both relevant to practice and germane to knowledge-building are needed. This paper demonstrates the use of the eco map, a common practice tool, to collect and organize data about families, thus bridging a gap between practice and research functions.

For the past two decades, the social work profession has played host to a continuing dialogue about the interplay between research and practice (Fischer, 1981). The ongoing discussion has focused on paradigms around which to construct knowledge about the people and problems encountered by social workers. Often reduced to a dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methodology, much of this debate has focused on the discontinuity between direct work with clients and research that attempts to explore and explain the issues faced by individuals,
families, and communities. Traditionally, social work practitioners collect data which have real-world usefulness and are relevant to the intervention process with particular clients. Social work researchers, on the other hand, are skilled in designing and conducting studies which result in data that can be generalized to build the profession's foundation of knowledge. Because of this controversy, methods of gathering data that are pertinent to both research and practice are of particular interest to social work. Data collection tools and techniques that are both relevant to practice and germane to knowledge-building are needed. Methods that can 'cross over' between research and practice are required for meaningful practice-based research.

A previous article (Harold, Palmiter, Lynch, & Freedman-Doan, 1995) addressed this issue in its discussion of a qualitative data collection and analysis process easily applied to diverse practice settings. The method described was a "story board" used to guide family interviews. The use of story telling as a data collection method was paired with ethnographic content analysis to organize and understand information gathered in face-to-face contacts with parents of school-aged children. While originally conceived as part of a research project, this tool was adaptable and easily applied to direct practice settings.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate another way that research and practice methods can be merged to produce meaningful, descriptive information about clients and their lives. The research group searched for existing data-collection tools for use in an ongoing qualitative study of family development. The eco map, a common practice tool, was selected to collect and organize information about the families being studied. The eco map was chosen because of its potential to effectively 'cross over', bridging the gap between practice and research functions, and because of its familiarity to many practitioners.

Eco Maps

The eco map was introduced over 20 years ago as an assessment tool for families in the child welfare system (Hartman, 1978). Originally devised as a simulation or model of an ecological system, the eco map highlights the connections between a family and its environment. A family or household is drawn as a genogram
within a circle at the center of a page. External systems such as church, professional helpers, and schools are identified and drawn as circles surrounding the household. Different kinds of connecting lines are used to relate information about the nature of the relationships between family members and outside systems. When completed, an eco map is a graphic representation of a family’s relationship to the world. Hartman (1978) asserted that the eco map’s “primary value is in its visual impact and in its ability to organize and present concurrently not only a great deal of factual information but also the relationships between variables in a situation” (p. 472).

Social work students are frequently instructed about the use of eco maps in their practice courses, and social work practitioners commonly have some experience in using this model of organizing information during an assessment interview. Beyond this, however, little has been written about the specific use of eco maps with special population groups or practice situations. In fact, references to eco maps in the literature nearly exclusively focus on the map as a tool to organize information gathered during assessment (e.g., Flashman, 1991; Gilgun, 1994; Mattaini, 1990). A notable exception is Valentine’s (1993) study which used the eco map as a tool in differentiating types of families within a clinical population and as a planning device for intervention with developmentally disabled children.

This paper attempts to expand the perception of the eco map beyond a static device for organizing assessment information by demonstrating its use as a tool that can combine research and practice in many settings. In addition, suggestions will be made for using the eco map as an instrument for planning and intervention with diverse population groups.

Methods

History of the Project

This study was an outgrowth of a larger, longitudinal study (Eccles & Blumenfield, 1984; Eccles, Blumenfield, Harold & Wigfield, 1990) that was designed to assess the development of self perception, academic achievement, and activity choices of school children. The original study involved approximately 900 children
and began when they were in kindergarten, first and third grades. The children attended 12 schools located in four Midwestern school districts in primarily white, lower-middle to middle class communities surrounding a large metropolitan center. In addition to student participation, parents and teachers were also involved in completing questionnaires and interviews. This study has continued to follow these children who are now in ninth, tenth, and twelfth grades, using a combination of surveys and interviews for data collection.

In the third year of the project, a subset of the original sample was developed by adding the siblings of some of the original subjects to the group being studied. These siblings were limited to brothers and sisters of the original children who were also in elementary school, but were not included in the original project because they were not in the targeted grades. The siblings were added in order to facilitate the study of family development, family characteristics, and similarities/differences between family members. This project resulted in the development of a story board that guided the interview process as well as the analysis of the data collected in the interviews (Harold, et al., 1995). This paper uses data collected from the second contact made by the researchers with these “sibling families”. The purpose of this study was to explore the changes experienced by families as children develop into adolescents. Data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Sample

Families with more than one child who had been targeted as part of the “sibling” project were re-contacted and asked to participate in a study regarding child and adolescent development and the roles that families play. Fifty-five families with two or three children participated in this sub-study. Of these, 95 parents completed interviews: 40 parental couples responded along with 15 additional mothers whose current or ex-partners chose not to participate. In the 55 families, 45 couples were married to the same partner as they had been during previous contact with the research group, three were remarried, six were divorced and currently single, and one had remained single. The mean age of the mothers in the sample was 40 years old while the mean age of
the fathers was 46. A total of 103 adolescents participated. There were 53 boys and 50 girls, ages 13–18.

The average education level of the mothers in the sample was "some college". The average level of fathers was "completion of a college degree". During the earlier study (Harold et al., 1995), many of the parents talked about their educational preparation for the work force and the subsequent dilemma of having children and working (i.e., whether to work and how much?). Several women, in particular, talked about changing or beginning work when their children got older. It is not surprising then, that of the 55 mothers who were interviewed, 29 (52%) now worked full-time. Another 17 (30%) worked half or "part"-time, while 9 (18%) reported that they did not work for pay. All of the fathers reported working full-time. In terms of religion, almost half of the sample identified themselves as Catholic, another third as some denomination of Protestantism, and the rest indicated no preference. A tie with religion was an important feature in some of the eco maps.

Some families who were identified as subjects did not participate in the study. Five of the families with siblings had moved out of the area and were unable to be interviewed. Seventeen indicated that family illness or other circumstances prohibited their participation. In all, 71% of the originally-identified sample who participated in the qualitative, i.e., story board, study were included in this follow up study.

**Procedures**

Letters were sent to identified families asking parents and adolescents to participate in the study and indicating that they would be contacted by phone to request interviews. The families were then called to schedule in-person interviews in their homes. Whenever possible, all targeted members of the family were encouraged to participate in the interviews (e.g., both parents and two or three siblings). Interviews were scheduled to accommodate the families' schedules as much as possible, with many of the interviews occurring in the evening so that working parents and teens who were involved in outside activities could participate.

Prior to meeting with the families, interviewers completed a training program designed to maximize the qualitative nature
of the data collected. Interviewers were encouraged to use clinical and communication skills to obtain accurate and in-depth information about the families being studied. Interviewers were trained to distinguish between the goals of interviewing for research purposes and interviewing for clinical intervention and to be cognizant of the potential for subjects to reveal information that might require follow-up with a helping professional. Although some of the interviewers had substantial practice backgrounds and all interviewers used clinical skills in collecting information, the data-gathering interviews were quite different from assessments typically conducted in practice settings. For example, no effort was made to elicit deep emotion during the interviews, nor was any attempt made to create change during the relatively brief encounter between interviewer and subject.

Interviewers were also trained regarding the specific goals of the study as reflected in the interview questions and the eco map as an interview tool. The interview itself was developed with a semi-structured set of questions and a series of sub-questions, or probes, to assist the participants in focusing on the research questions. Interviewers were encouraged to develop familiarity with the interview process through practice interviews during role-playing exercises but were reminded that the participants' unsolicited comments would be recorded as a valuable part of the qualitative study as well. The interview process was also modified during this period after receiving feedback from the interviewers about their experiences with the protocol during the training exercises.

Most interviewers worked in teams while conducting the face-to-face interviews. Each participating member of the target family met with a trained interviewer in the home. Participants were asked to sign consent forms that explained the rationale for the study, parameters of confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the interview. Permission to tape record the interviews was obtained. Parent and child interviews were slightly different but both were guided by an interview protocol which included the completion of an eco map and focused on the transition from childhood to adolescence and subsequent changes in the structure and the quality of the relationships within the family.
During the interview, participants were shown a blank diagram of an eco map (see Figure 1) containing a central oval surrounded by several additional ovals labeled with the names of institutions, relationships, and systems that might be present in the participants' lives and might offer social support or be the source of stress. Participants were asked to help the interviewer complete the eco map by describing the nature of the relationships between family members and between the family and systems outside of the family. Starting with the central oval that represented the household, participants were asked to name members of the family and to represent the nature of the relationships by choosing a type of line to symbolize the interaction between the family members. As shown on the sample eco map, five types of relationships were symbolized by the lines: non-interactive, strong-positive, stressful-negative, tenuous-strained, and changed relationships.

After diagramming the intra-family relationships, participants were asked to identify systems outside the family and to choose lines to represent relationships between the household and the social systems. Some ovals were labeled to suggest potential sources of extra-family relationships (e.g., extended family, work, school) while others were left blank and could be filled in with any person, system, or institution suggested by the participant. For each oval, participants were asked to identify a line that best described the relationship between the participant and the outside oval. Then participants were also asked to identify a line which best described the relationship between the whole family and the outside oval, thus completed eco maps had two lines between the central oval and each of the appropriate surrounding ovals.

While working on the eco maps, participants were encouraged to discuss the diagrammed relationships in greater detail. Interviewers asked open-ended questions to probe for additional information about the quality and history of the relationships. Many of the probes were also intended to elicit information about the availability of resources during the children's transition into adolescence. Other questions explored specific sources of stress and/or support for the family. Interviewers wrote pertinent, additional information on the eco maps as indicated by the participants and as space allowed.
Figure 1

Family eco map.
After each interview was completed, interviewers were asked to reflect on the experience and to give feedback to the research team on the process. Regular meetings were scheduled to encourage the interviewers to discuss their experiences with each other and to modify the interview protocol, if necessary. Interview techniques that resulted in rich, descriptive data were encouraged while questions/probes which yielded sparse information were discontinued. Following the collection of data in the form of audio-taped interviews and completed eco maps, the research team met to develop methods for analyzing and interpreting the data.

Results

A preliminary assessment of the eco maps revealed the exceptional quantity and quality of data recorded on the diagrams completed with the interview participants. As a result of this abundance of data, the research team spent considerable time further organizing, encoding, and systematizing the information presented. A primary consideration in the process was that the richness and individual nature of the information not be 'lost' in the research process or by reductionistic data analysis techniques. Further, the research team hoped to make the data more coherent by organizing the material in such a way that it was easily understood and useful in making inferences about the families being studied.

An initial coding scheme was developed for the central, i.e., household, oval in which the type and frequency of relationship lines were recorded for each eco map. In addition, key issues were identified using an emic approach, and the presence or absence of these themes were recorded. A refinement of that process yielded the code sheet illustrated in Figure 2. One sheet was used per family unit to record each family member’s reported themes and each person’s assessment, i.e., line choice, of intra-familial relationships. Using this coding method, it was possible to easily visually identify 1) developmental themes that were important to different members in the family, 2) relationship dynamics between the members such as alliances, conflicts, unspoken tensions, and cutoffs, as well as individual and familial patterns of presenting the
relationships within the family, e.g., some members chose a strong positive line to represent every relationship regardless of their verbally reported appraisal of the relationship.

Another type of coding involved looking at the consistency between the type of lines that family members chose to describe relationships and the words that they used in talking about those same relationships (Harold, Colarossi, & Mercier, 1996). Examining line choices and subjects' verbal descriptions yielded three categories of consistency. The first, "high consistency", can be illustrated by the mother who chose a conflictual line to depict the father-son relationship and described it as follows: "Re-

Figure 2.

Eco map coding sheet for intra-family relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family ID:</th>
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relationships between them have always been stressful. There's not too much in common. It never seems like anything is good enough for his father. [Son] tries his best to make his dad happy, but his expectations are too high. [Dad] can't accept him for who he is."

The second category, "low consistency", is shown in this quote from a mother who depicted the parental relationship with a strong positive line and then said, "We've been married 22 years. We tolerate each other. If he were home more often, it would be more stressful, we'd probably be divorced."

"Ambiguous/mixed consistency" describes the third category where subjects chose a line that represented their feelings some of the time, but clearly did not encompass the total relationship. For example, one teen who indicated a strong positive line, said about his sibling, "We do things together, but it is stressful with petty arguments."

Yet another type of coding that can be done involves looking at the verbal and graphic descriptions of relationships between the subject, the family, and the outer systems. It is interesting to look at which systems individuals feel impact their lives, how they describe the relationships with these systems, and the similarity or difference among family members' views. Comparison of the eco maps within a family also exposes family secrets. For example, in one family, all but the youngest member talked about the family's involvement in counseling, and indicated that the youngest did not know about it. Indeed, the counseling oval was left blank on the youngest child's form, either because she truly did not know, or because she knew she was not supposed to know. This child's statement regarding counseling was, "not that I know of".

Discussion

In this study, eco maps were used for enhancing the way in which data were gathered from and about the families being interviewed. Eco maps lend themselves easily to the task of gathering information in both practice and research settings. Hartman (1978), in her introduction of the eco map as a practice tool, suggested that the eco map was developed primarily to assist in concisely presenting complex data. This study demonstrated that
the eco map also lends itself to applications in the research field, and in fact, can provide a bridge for the practice-research gap.

Interviewers were impressed with the amount of information gathered within the time constraints of a typical interview. The eco map information took less than an hour to collect. The eco map provided both a guide for the interview and a convenient outline on which to note important information about the individual and her/his family. In addition, because of its standardized format, the information gathered was easily relayed from the interviewers to others who interpreted the data. There are several articles published on the use of diagrammatic techniques for clinical and research-based assessments (e.g., Beck, 1987; Congress, 1994; McPhatter, 1991; Van Treuren, 1986).

Social workers who use eco maps for clinical assessment are sometimes faced with the dilemma of having collected significant material but having little knowledge of what to do with the information after the data-gathering session. In the practice setting, such eco maps may be discarded as too cumbersome to be useful. The process of analysis and of interpretation that is presented above highlights the importance of this tool. The eco map has value for the social worker in his/her understanding of individual and family perceptions, dynamics, patterns, and themes, and enables the worker to present a summary picture to a supervisor or consultant who can also examine the data and either corroborate or challenge the worker’s assessment. Additionally, the worker can use the map to visually feedback findings to the family/client. As a metaphor for the ambiance of a particular family environment, the eco map provides a graphic tool for the family.

Comparison of eco maps within a family can assist the family in recognizing the different perceptions and experiences of its members. Such awareness naturally leads to interventions that assist families with improved communication and more realistic expectations of its members. The use of eco maps as a tool for family members to relay information to each other is particularly applicable to non-traditional clients and those who are less verbally descriptive by virtue of age, ability, ethnicity/culture or personality. For example, our study interviewed teenagers who are often prone to verbal responses such as, “I dunno” and shrugging
shoulders. The eco maps offered them another form of expression that provided some structure and guidance without reducing their thoughts to answers on a scale or to yes and no responses.

Eco maps reveal patterns of behavior and relationships that can inform intervention on many levels. Using one set of relationships as a symbolic representation of the family's characteristic method of giving/receiving support can help members of a family to work on identified problems. Imber-Black (1988) describes graphically representing an isolated family who overuses intra-family support. This visual representation could help family members gain insight into the family dynamic or pattern as well as help them identify outer systems of support that may be available to them. Such graphic representations of functional and dysfunctional modes of coping may be enough to induce a desire for change in families. If not, practitioners may use the evidence of patterns to focus and design interventions.

Much has been written in the social service literature about the multi-problem family. Practitioners confronted with clients who are experiencing difficulties in every sphere of their lives may become overwhelmed and ineffective. In a similar way, clients who exist in chaotic and hostile environments may approach intervention with pessimism. In such situations, using the eco map to focus on a single relationship or situation may present a more manageable picture. Such an approach is more likely to result in positive change which can then be generalized to other relationships or situations.

According to systems theory, change in one part of the eco map should result in a shift in all other relationships on the map (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This concept is central to diverse philosophies of change, including most family therapy work (Gray, Duhl, & Rizzo, 1969). Using eco maps developed by the family members themselves, practitioners can strategize about the relationships most amenable to change when constructing service plans. Focus on the most effective arena for change should work to lower frustration, decrease length of treatment, and increase positive outcomes in practice.

In addition to its use as an assessment and intervention tool, the eco map can assist in developing relationships between interviewers and subjects (Hartman, 1978). In this study, collab-
orative relationships were quickly built when eco maps were used as devices for study participants to “introduce themselves” to the interviewers. Similar situations, in which a relatively unknown interviewer seeks detailed information from a service recipient, are common in the practice field, especially in agency settings in which a worker is assigned to intake and assessment for purposes of streamlining, triage, or other systemic needs. Also, solution-focused and strength-based practice rely on “exceptions” in clients’ lives for initiating resolution to presenting problems. Looking for strengths illustrated on the eco map may result in changed perceptions about the client’s or family’s relationship skills, social supports, or patterns of communicating.

For research purposes, the eco map has several applications. It can be used to produce in-depth case studies of individuals within a family system to broaden knowledge about individual emotional and behavioral symptoms and how they affect and are affected by family systems. Mapping can be done to test out existing developmental theory as well as to generate hypotheses (Mauzey & Erdman, 1995).

Similarly, eco maps provide the opportunity to compare and analyze relationship patterns or themes and issues over time and/or within certain populations, across many families. By using a coding scheme similar to the one presented in this paper, frequencies can be obtained across many subjects, providing systematic information for descriptive research studies based on qualitative data. For example, in this study’s sample, ten percent of families reported high levels of conflict when the child became an adolescent. Using a simple t-test and correlations, the data suggested that these families also were more likely to have teens with behavior problems in school and problems with depression. Research findings such as these can help practitioners develop treatment strategies based on an understanding of factors that contribute to individual and social problems. Eco map data could also be used to analyze which aspects of the social system, outside the family, when impoverished are associated with what kinds of child difficulties, allowing social workers to focus treatment, case management, and/or social policy efforts on these systems.

As an evaluation tool, a worker could use eco maps as a pre- and post-treatment measure by assessing relationships or comparing intra-family perceptions at the beginning of treatment
and upon termination. Using a standardized eco map procedure, the practitioner could monitor or evaluate her/his practice and perhaps share findings with the client through visual presentation and comparison of maps. The social worker and client can see how individuals and systems change over time with the use of different treatment modalities, e.g., family therapy, individual therapy, intervention with outside systems. A worker can use the maps as part of a single system design with one family or individual, or compare data across families and individuals to assess the differential impact of treatment modalities on similar social problems.

Lastly, the eco map can be used as a qualitative research tool for developing theoretical knowledge across a large sample of clients. For example, once the information were encoded on the standardized code sheets for each family in this study, Harold et al. (1996) used eco map data to examine what changes parents and teens themselves described as important experiences during the shift from childhood to adolescence. Conflict and stress between teenagers and parents has long been portrayed as a characteristic of the transition from childhood to adolescence. Although past research describing these parent-child interactions has focused on linear effects, emerging theories are postulating that parents and teens are part of a larger, more complex and reciprocal family system, as can be depicted using the eco map methodology. Contrary to the storm and stress model of adolescence and research on struggles between parents and children over independence, more parents and teens who commented on parent-child relationships reported improved relationships with the onset of adolescence. Changes in sibling relationships were also reported as being more positive than negative. Maturation seems to lead to more tolerance for differences in personality and interests, although some stated that the sibs no longer engaged in activities together and this was seen as negative.

In sum, the eco map can produce data which are deep and real in the lives of those being interviewed. As suggested in the literature, the eco map is particularly suited to social work assessment in various practice settings. However, this paper has also explored ways in which data provided by the use of eco maps can inform practice and knowledge development. Eco maps are
a tool that can 'cross over' and be useful for both research and practice applications.

References


New Communitarian Thought
and the Future of Social Policy

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Communitarian thought is an emerging force in American social policy in the 1990s. Communitarians see the breakdown of community and morality as the major problem of our society. They conclude that rampant individualism is the cause of this breakdown. Communitarians propose reforms that will limit rampant individualism and restore our communities and institutions. In these proposals are threats to social justice, as well as positive elements that social workers can endorse. This paper reviews and critiques the communitarian position and suggests ways that social workers can use this new force to advance the cause of social justice.

New Communitarian thought represents a major emergent force in both academic discourse and the evolving dialog about social policy (Winkler, 1993; Etzioni, 1993a; 1995; McNutt, 1994). Policy makers, academics and social critics from a wide variety of orientations have embraced the communitarian cause (Winkler, 1993). Both of the Vice Presidential contenders in the 1996 election have strong ties to the new communitarians. New communitarian ideas about welfare reform, national health care, crime and justice, education, national service and the survival of entitlement have surfaced in the policy debate and even in proposed and enacted legislation.

It is critical that those involved in creating and analyzing social policy understand this emergent intellectual force. Some new communitarian policy ideas will promote social justice, other ideas are not so positive. Moreover, since the new communitarian agenda is not completely formed, there is an opportunity for social workers to participate in the way the new communitarian
position develops. This paper will discuss new communitarian though as it affects the policy debate about poverty, work and social justice.

The New Communitarian Position

The liberal and conservative social policy positions share a common heritage that places greatest stress on the individual and on individual rights and welfare. The new communitarian approach rejects the individual-centered analysis of both positions and argues for a position that emphasizes the common good, community, public morality and virtue (Etzioni, 1995; 1993; 1991). The new communitarians represent a slight departure from past communitarian thinking (Etzioni, 1995; Cochran, 1989).

New communitarians consider the breakdown of community and morality to be one of the central problems of our time and point to the perceived growth of individualism as the primary cause of this situation (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1985, Etzioni, 1995; 1993; 1989; Lasch, 1986). A similar conclusion is reached by the declining social capital critique (Putnam, 1993; 1995a; 1995b; 1996) and the civil society school (Siev-ers, 1995; McNutt & Byers, 1996; Van Til, 1995). The liberal and conservative schools are seen by communitarians as promoting individualism at the expense of community, morality and civic virtue.

Some new communitarians argue that liberal thought, and to a certain extent conservative thought, has lead to a “proliferation of rights” without corresponding responsibilities (Etzioni, 1993) that has accelerated the impact of individualism on society. Etzioni (1993, p. 263–264) asserts that this reciprocity is the primary principle of social justice from a new communitarian standpoint and that balancing rights and responsibilities will ensure the survival of community.

This reciprocal set of rights and responsibilities puts the new communitarians at odds with both conservatives and liberals. Conservatives argue that individual economic actors have a right to control societal resources and make a profit, but rarely talk about the responsibilities that business has to society (Friedman, 1962). The conservative position argues that the only responsibility an economic actor has is to maximize his or her self interest.
The liberal perspective defines a set of individual rights for all persons. Rawls' (1971) thinking on social justice develops a series of rights without context and without responsibilities. Context and responsibilities can lead to unfairness. Against the background of personalistic justice and unjust use of authority, this emphasis on stripping away context is not surprising.

New communitarians argue that the extension of rights without responsibility, and ignoring context has led to the breakdown of community and the creation of a nation of alienated, isolated individuals (Etzioni, 1993; Bellah, et al., 1985). Etzioni (1993), for example, has called for a moratorium on the creation of additional individual rights. New communitarians also advocate for policies designed to reverse this community destruction process and nurture and support the community and its social institutions (Bellah, et al., 1985; 1991; Etzioni, 1993).

The family as seen as the most critical institution. New communitarians have advocated a wide range of measures to support the family, including family leave, adequate wages for family breadwinners, child support enforcement and laws to make divorce more difficult (Etzioni, 1993; Elshtain, J. Aird, E., Etzioni, A, Galston, W., Glendon, M., Minow, M. & Rossi, A. 1993). While the new communitarians advocate stable families, they suggest that they are not pleading for a return to the authoritarian families of the past. They prefer two parent families because such a family offers a better chance for proper child rearing and moral education.

Moral and civic education and renewal of religion are also seen as important, as is community service (Etzioni, 1993; Coles, 1993; Bellah, et al., 1985; 1991). These are institutions that promote public morality and virtue and teach citizenship.

New communitarians are concerned about the decline of political participation and the reduced credibility of the governmental system (Elshtain, 1996; Etzioni, 1993; Bellah, et al., 1985; 1991; Barber, 1984) and favor reforming the political system to make it more participative and restore its moral authority. They identify corruption, special interests and lack of morality as major problems. Etzioni (1991, p. 37–38) argues for the elimination of political action committees and advocates public campaign financing. Barber (1984) goes further and proposes “Strong Democracy,” a more participatory alternative that requires considerable citizen
commitment to the affairs of the community. New communitarians are supportive of majority rule, with varying degrees of concern for minority rights (Barber, 1984; Etzioni, 1993). This issue has created a rift within new communitarian circles (Winkler, 1993).

Many social control issues are taken outside the legal system and handled by more informal control methods. Etzioni (1993) talks about the “Moral Voice of the Community” as a means of dispelling hate speech and other social ills. New communitarians also advocate for mutual aid (Etzioni, 1993; Bellah, et al. 1985) rather than formal social welfare programs.

There is limited recognition (by the new communitarians) that some of their ideas can have negative consequences. Mainstream community values can create problems for oppressed groups. Etzioni (1991) suggests that mass media and other protections will prevent communities from becoming oppressive. Recent history suggests that this is not altogether true and not all new communitarians (Benjamin Barber, for example—see Winkler, 1993) are convinced. Some new communitarians evade this issue by specifying that communities must be “responsive.” What a responsive community consists of is not clearly defined and what one must do to have a responsible community is not well developed.

One difficult issue is the proposed moratorium on new rights that Etzioni (1993) has promoted. It is difficult to see how even a marginally responsive government can agree to such a plan. It is also unclear how we will differentiate new rights from existing rights in changing social systems. How civil rights legislation might fare under a communitarian system is also problematic (Walker, 1993). Some determination of how a responsive community would protect such rights (absent the legal system) and how we can assure that all communities are responsive will be difficult, but essential issues to deal with (Walker, 1993).

Derber (1994) and Walker (1993) argue that new communitarians have failed to deal meaningfully with the economy, poverty and inequality. Walker (1993) observes that new communitarians have failed to deal meaningfully with the destruction of community that is often caused by economic restructuring and plant closing. Derber (1994) calls Etzioni’s approach to communitarianism “Professional Middle Class Communitarianism” and charges
that it is biased toward middle class concerns and away from the needs of the poor. Sawhill (1992) makes a similar point with regard to poverty and policies toward the poor.

While the new communitarians have reached consensus on some issues, not all things have been decided. Still, the new communitarians have made considerable progress in refining their agenda and getting it accepted into public discourse. This means that their ideas will have an impact on the social welfare system.

Social Welfare Policy

The new communitarians have defined a number of ideas about social policy (McNutt, 1994). There would be a balance of rights and responsibilities. The Clinton administration's original proposed policy to make AFDC short term, but couple it with enhanced job training, education and day care, is one example (Office of the Press Secretary, 1993, February 2). On balance, the current welfare reform legislation that does not include these services should be attacked by communitarians as being punitive. The National Service plan for higher education aid is another illustration of new communitarian thinking. The right to aid balanced with the responsibility for service. A renewed commitment to collect child support would also be a policy of choice (Elshtain, J. et al., 1993). Wolfe (1991) and Shapiro (1992/93) argue that those with higher incomes have a responsibility to take less in terms of entitlement programs, a proposal consistent with taxing social security and higher Medicare fees for upper income recipients. The Administration's abortive National Health Plan included penalties for people making more risky lifestyle choices (like smokers or problem drinkers, see White House Domestic Policy Council, 1993, p. 3). It should be of interest to social policy scholars that the logical outcome of the new communitarian position is an affirmative defense of blaming the victim.

New communitarians would argue for programs administered at the local level, but strong norms of participation also would be included. Communitarians favor active local government (Ostrom, 1993) and mutual aid (Etzioni, 1993). Implied in new communitarian thinking is a preference for local, rather than national policy making.
New communitarians endorse policies that support family life, such as flexible time, family leave, child allowances, using schools to instill family values and the provision of family life education to potential parents (Elshtain, et al., 1993). New communitarians also advocate tightening divorce laws and changing other laws that (in their view) have a negative impact on the family (Elshtain, et al., 1993). There is a preference for two parent families and, therefore, any policy that encouraged such families would be looked upon favorably.

New Communitarians, Poverty and Social Justice

If the new communitarian position is likely to gain significant support as the decade continues, it is also likely that their ideas will influence social welfare policy. This will have implications for social and economic justice?

Social workers have espoused (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) a commitment to social and economic justice (Reeser & Epstein, 1987). It is, therefore, appropriate to ask what impact communitarian thought might have on this important set of values. Many social workers rely on John Rawls' (1971) theory of justice or similar formulations by Beverly and McSweeney (1987) or Goulet (1971). These theories represent the liberal approach that the new communitarians (especially Walzer and Sandel) oppose as being without grounding in community. Since the basic issue appears to be community versus individual rights, the literature suggests that we can identify four positions along a continuum (See George & Wilding, 1976). These positions are displayed in figure one.

The Community Reigns Supreme Position is one where community rights are superior in all respects to individual rights. In reality, there are no individual rights. This is the situation that existed in the feudal period of Europe prior to industrialization. At this extreme, the common good is the only good. Etzioni (1990) charges that MacIntyre (1984) takes this position. Social justice is sacrificing oneself to the common good. There is some room to speculate that the New Christian Right might support such a position. A theocracy could also be placed in this category.

The Community and the Common Good Position is taken by most new communitarians. The analysis of Walzer (1983), Sandel (1983)
and Etzioni's (1989) "I and We Paradigm" fits within this category (Etzioni, 1990). This conception of rights links individual rights with community rights (and therefore individual responsibilities). It also has a strong conception of a common good.

The **Individuals Need Community Position** is next. This is the traditional liberal position. It defines a free individual with rights to certain benefits in society. In terms of social justice, this position relies heavily on the theories of Rawls (1971), who develop a view of the individual without regard for social context and reject the idea of a definable common good independent of the well being of individual (Mishra, 1984; Beverly & McSweeney, 1987; see also Etzioni, 1990). This is not to say the liberals do not work for a common good—a common or public good is central to the idea of state intervention and planning. The common good is defined in terms of what will benefit all individuals and that the market cannot deliver. The connection between rights and responsibilities is thin and social justice is assured by state action (George & Wilding, 1976; Mishra, 1984).

The **Individual Reigns Supreme Position** is taken by libertarians and conservatives. Good comes from free individuals operating

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| All individual rights are unimportant if they interfere with the needs of the community. Social Justice is community. | Individual rights must be balanced with community needs. Social Justice in community | Individual rights are of primary importance but the needs of all must be considered. Social Justice with community | The individual must come first in order to have an efficient society. Self interest is the key to social justice. Individual justice is social justice |
in a free economic market. When each person maximizes his self interest, optimal well being will result. This definition of social justice equates individual self interest with the common good. A government that intervenes on behalf of another standard of the common good will decrease welfare for everyone by creating economic inefficiency (Friedman, 1962; Popple & Leighninger, 1990). Economic actors are responsible only to optimize their own self interest.

These four positions are, of course, ideal types and do not exhaust all the possibilities, although they do define the range. Bearing that in mind, it is still possible to use them for illustrative purposes. Most social policy thinking within social work falls into category three. This is not surprising, given that much of the thinking behind the welfare state (particularly the efforts of John Maynard Keynes and Lord Beveridge) comes from this line of thought (Mishra, 1984). Liberals are usually seen opposing conservatives (position four), rather than the other two positions.

New communitarian thinking would be attractive to those who pursue a centrist position. It is not conservatism and rejects the view that individuals are responsible for their own fate and society ought to only intervene in exceptional circumstances (Friedman, 1962; George & Wilding, 1976). It also rejects many of the assumptions of the welfare state, such as legal rights to assistance without corresponding responsibilities, unlimited entitlements and national social programs (Mishra, 1984). One way to envision the uniqueness of this position is the rights and responsibilities issue and the problem of context in social justice.

The question that separates liberals from the new communitarians really is not whether those who benefit from social programs should have responsibilities. The issue is how those responsibilities will be applied and who will have discretion. This is a reflection of the issue of community Vs individual rights. Much of our policy-making over the past fifty or so years has been aimed at minimizing the system’s capacity to treat the individual unfairly and this has translated into techniques designed to minimize discretion (such as regulations, due process procedures, impartial hearings, civil service and so forth) Most of these methods require stripping away any context from the decision
(see Rawls, 1971) so that unfairness will not occur. Any power that can be abused will be abused.

New communitarians argue (as do feminists, see Hekman, 1992 and others) that the context is not only important but essential. It is the major link with community. When context is not considered, the community is ignored and possibly damaged. This limits the ability of the community to provide informal aid and disempowers the community. There are consequences to weakened communities.

The debate over social policy boils down to our willingness to trust our communities. There are reasons not to trust. The history of local administration of human services and civil rights has provided abundant cause for concern. On balance, the destruction of community and social fabric has also taken toll (see Putnam, 1995; 1996; Elshtain, 1996). Social workers have a great deal of experience with the breakdown of community and know that the costs can be terrible (McNutt & Byers, 1996). Damaged communities provide impaired informal helping systems and place additional stress on the formal system. The ecological model well illustrates the importance of these community systems (Germain and Gitterman, 1980). The new communitarians are not wrong about the need to preserve and protect communities but they may not understand the ability of even well functioning communities to do damage to individuals.

The communitarian quest for stronger communities is social work's quest as well. We must find ways of building communities so that they are willing and able to both support all of their members and, at the same time, protect their rights. This means building functional communities with appropriate safeguards. The new communitarians have done little to explain how this might be done, so social workers can make an important contribution. Much of the group work and community organization technology that we have developed is appropriate to this problem (McNutt & Byers, 1996). Specht and Courtney (1994) offer suggestions about how communitarian thought might contribute to developing community-friendly service delivery systems. Swenson (1994) suggests ways that clinical practice can promote community. Social workers also have experience in identifying injustices and protecting the rights of individuals. These advocacy and
analysis skills can be used to counter those who argue for a rebirth of community at any cost. Gilbert (1992/93) provides an excellent example of the latter effort when he points out that the communitarian effort to build responsibilities into welfare programs is built on an incomplete understanding of who benefits from social welfare. Along the same vein, Sawhill (1992), cautions that middle class assumptions may not meet the realities that the poor face in their daily lives.

Policy could be framed in such a way that rights can only be fulfilled within the context of a community. For example, we might say that children have the right to stable families and nurturing communities and that it is the responsibility of the local, state and national government to provide conditions favorable to their development (see McNutt, 1991). This must also include protection of minority subcommunities from discrimination and oppression. This would clearly put new communitarians at odds with an economy that often sees communities as expendable (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; 1988), but it might prevent a host of actions that destroy communities.

The debate between new communitarians and others promises renewed opportunity for social work involvement because these are issues with which our profession has long struggled. While the new communitarian agenda is still somewhat mutable, it appears to have gathered considerable political support. Social workers have superior understanding of some of the issues that the new communitarians are exploring, so our contribution is both needed and timely.

References


Time Series Analysis of the Implementation of Child Support Enforcement Policies in Federal Region V States

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This study examines the impact legislation, such as the Family Support Act of 1988, Child Support Recovery Act of 1992 and Ted Weiss Child Support Enforcement Act of 1992 had on child support enforcement in Federal Region V states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin). These pieces of legislation authorize coercive means to force noncustodial parents to meet their child support obligations. Child support is the money noncustodial parents are obligated to pay for the support of their children on a monthly basis. Child support laws have been enacted to increase the number of noncustodial parents located, paternities established, child support orders issued, and child support payments. Social and economic factors that help to explain state variations in child support collections are also analyzed. Time series analysis was applied to secondary data collected from 1984–1994. The data was collapsed into two periods 1984–1988 and 1989–1994 in order to determine if legislation enacted after 1988 had an effect on child support enforcement in Federal Region V. The results from this study indicate that certain variables had the greatest impact on child support enforcement in each state in Federal Region V. The findings from this study provide beneficial strategies which may enhance current child support enforcement practices.

Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, December, 1997, Volume XXIV, Number 4
Introduction

There were an estimated 16,334,000 children living in mother only households in 1994. Children living in mother only households are three times more likely to be living at or below the poverty level compared to children in father only households and six times more likely compared to children living with both parents (Rodgers, 1994). Mother only households are often forced to become dependent on welfare due to their limited earnings, large number of dependents, and the noncustodial parent’s failure to pay child support. Thus, the United States Congress has enacted numerous pieces of legislation to encourage noncustodial parents to meet their financial obligation to their children. Making noncustodial parents economically responsible for their children is one of the strategies for reducing poverty and welfare dependence among poor families.

Legislative Overview of The Child Support Enforcement Program

The Federal government has been helping families having financial difficulties for more than 60 years. The Social Security Act of 1935 was the first comprehensive federal welfare legislation. Title IV of this act, known as Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), provided cash benefits to families who had lost their sole provider, usually due to an untimely death.

In 1950, the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws drafted the Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act (URESA) which contained child support policies regarding noncustodial parents residing in another state. Amendments were added to this body of legislation in 1952, 1958, and 1968 (Committee on Ways and Means, United States House of Representatives, 1993). This early attempt at child support enforcement was viewed as a means of containing the growth in ADC cases and reducing child poverty.

In the 1960's the name of ADC was changed to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which also provided benefits to the caretaker (Blum, 1994). The objective of this legislation was to reduce poverty without forcing mothers, primarily widows, into the labor force. AFDC continued to grow in size and began
to serve families headed by divorced, separated, or never married mothers.

In 1973, there were 113 children per thousand receiving AFDC benefits. Census data showed that children residing in single parent households were more likely to live below the poverty level. (Peterson and Petersen, 1994). In 1975, to combat this growing problem Congress added Part D to Title IV of the Social Security Act of 1935, (Public Law 93–647) which created the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement and required all states to set up Child Support Enforcement agencies. This amendment mandated that states (1) locate absent noncustodial parents; (2) establish paternity; (3) establish support orders; and (4) enforce support collections for families receiving AFDC benefits.

In 1980, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (Public Law 96-272) granted federal funding for the state child support enforcement agencies to help non-AFDC families collect child support. The states were allowed to charge an application fee up to $25 for child support enforcement services for non-AFDC families (Committee on Ways and Means: United States House of Representatives, 1993) The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (Public Law 97–35) gave states the power to withhold past due support from federal tax refunds when a noncustodial parent owed more than $150 in child support for a child receiving AFDC.

In 1984, Congress enacted the Child Support Enforcement Amendments to the Social Security Act of 1935, to strengthen child support enforcement. These amendments allowed states to (1) withhold state tax refunds; (2) report noncustodial parents to credit bureaus for delinquent child support amounts; (3) notify AFDC recipients of the amount the state had collected in child support on their behalf; (4) permit the establishment of paternity until the child’s 18th birthday; (5) impose IRS federal tax offset for non-AFDC families that have noncustodial parents who owe more than $500 for past due child support; and (6) assign liens on real and personal property.

Although the 1984 Child Support Amendments provided states with more leverage over noncustodial parents, the majority of them still did not meet their child support obligation. The average child support award was $1,250 annually which was only $3.45 a day for food, clothing, day care, and recreational activities
(Bergmann, 1987). In 1985, out of an estimated $10.9 billion owed by noncustodial parents for child support, only $7.2 billion was collected.

In 1988, the Family Support Act (Public Law 100-485) Title I, Child Support and the Establishment of Paternity strengthened existing child support policies. The most important provisions in this legislation were: (1) standards for establishing paternity in hospitals, through the courts, and by the IV-D agency for non-contested cases; (2) standard guidelines for establishing child support awards which states must review and adjust every three years; (3) states have the authority to impose wage withholding on noncustodial parents in all newly modified child support cases; (4) the authority to send regular billing, delinquency notices, liens on property, seizure and sale of property; (5) and the authority to report arrearages to credit agencies, garnishments of wages, and intercepting state and federal income tax refunds of noncustodial parents.

In 1992, the Ted Weiss Child Support Enforcement Act (Public Law 102-537), amended the Fair Credit Reporting Act requiring credit reporting agencies to include and retain in the consumer credit report the information on child support delinquencies for seven years. The Child Support Recovery Act of 1992 (Public Law 102-521) imposed a federal criminal penalty on noncustodial parents who flee to other states to avoid paying their child support obligation. The penalty for the first conviction is $5,000 and/or imprisonment for not more than six months; and for the second conviction a fine up to $150,000 and or/imprisonment up to two years.

The most recent child support legislation is Title III, Child Support of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193). This legislation grants states more flexibility over the dispersion of welfare and child support collections. The most significant provisions are: (1) states have the option of enforcing a support order against the grandparents (the parent of a minor noncustodial parent) if the minor custodial parent is receiving IV-A assistance, now called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); (2) state birth record agencies must offer an opportunity to putative fathers for voluntary acknowledgment of paternity which must be legally binding unless rescinded.
within 60 days; (3) states are authorized to suspend drivers, professional, occupational, and recreational licences of delinquent noncustodial parents; (4) credit bureaus must provide reports to authorized IV-D officials; and IV-D agencies must report arrearages to credit bureaus; (5) federal government is authorized to deny passports to noncustodial parents with arrears of more than $5,000; (6) all IV-D child support orders must include health care coverage if available; and (7) states must have an Automated State Directory of New Hires System in place by October 1, 1997 (Turestsky, 1996).

Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Behaviors of Noncustodial Parents

There are three theories that may explain the behavior of noncustodial parents regarding their financial obligations to their children: (1) deterrence, (2) shame and embarrassment, and (3) defiance. The deterrence theory takes the premise that people can be dissuaded from committing a prohibited act if they believe the sanctioning agency will deliver a swift and severe punishment (Sherman, 1993). The rate of compliance with the law thus seems to be associated with certainty, swiftness and severity of punishment for noncompliance. In general compliance rates are expected to increase both by the probability of detection and the severity of expected sanctions. To be effective punishment must be repeated often and extensive surveillance or monitoring of behavior is also necessary. Sanctions only deter the offender from breaking the law if he or she feels that the sanction is legitimate, the offender has a strong bond with the community, and she or he wants to maintain a connection within the community (Sherman, 1993). Thus, noncustodial parents who believe that coercive measures are legitimate will attempt to pay their child support obligation, even if they do not feel emotionally attached to that child.

However, according to Braithwaite (1989) shame and embarrassment within the community sometimes has a greater impact than one’s belief of legitimate legal sanctions. Shame refers to a self-imposed sanction that occurs when actors feel guilt or remorse due to violation of internalized norms (Grasmick, Burrsik, and Arnecklev, 1993). Embarrassment is defined as socially imposed sanctions which occur when actors violate norms.
endorsed by their significant others whose opinions the actors value and who have become aware of the actor’s transgression (Grasmick, Burrsik, and Arneklev, 1993). Noncustodial parents who feel ashamed to have their pictures on delinquent child support posters or on the Internet and who do not want the stigma of being known as deadbeat parents will attempt to pay their child support obligation. Noncustodial parents who feel that the child support enforcement laws are illegitimate and unfair will defy them joyously. Sherman (1993) devised four characteristics which may define the behavior of a deadbeat parent: (1) He or she defines sanctions as unfair, (2) is poorly bonded to or alienated from the sanctioning agency or the community the agency represents, (3) defines the sanction as stigmatizing, not a lawbreaking act, (4) and refuses to acknowledge the shame caused by sanctions. Thus, noncustodial parents who do not feel that child support enforcement laws are fair will abrogate their responsibility to provide toward their children’s economic well being. Compliance is also dependent on how well the law is implemented by the governing agency (Robinson, 1995).

Enforcement of laws enacted to change behavior is also influenced by the target groups’ access to information, the implementing agency’s ability to enforce policies; the agency’s ability to regulate sanctions, procedures, and the incentives for compliance. State agencies must make compliance an easy process. The factors that make it seem forbidding must be identified and changed. If the process for compliance is too difficult to understand or has too many costly barrier it makes it virtually impossible for people to respond to it positively.

In regards to child support obligations states which provide information about procedures and benefits to the public about the child support obligation and clearly convey what sanctions can be imposed quickly on noncustodial parents are likely to be more effective in achieving the purpose of child support enforcement policies. The purpose of this study is to determine whether more stringent measures passed since 1988 have increased the effectiveness of child support enforcement, particularly in respect to: (1) noncustodial parents located, (2) paternity and support orders established and (3) the amount of child support collected.
Selection of Research Methods: Time series analysis was used for studying the effect of tougher child support enforcement policies because this approach allowed the researchers to find out what factors were most influential and what events may have caused fluctuations in child support enforcement. Through time series analysis we analyzed the trend before and after the enactment of Family Support Act of 1988 to obtain a projection of what would have happened without the additional stringent measures. This projection was then compared with the actual trend after the intervention. The major limitation of the time series design is that one needs a large number of pre-intervention observations in order to model pre-intervention trends accurately.

To determine what impact the legislation has had on the dependent variables: noncustodial parents located, paternities established, support orders established, and the amount of child support collected, data were collected for eleven years and divided into two periods: (I) 1984-1988 and (II) 1989-1994. These two periods represent five years before and six years after the passage of the Family Support Act of 1988 in which more stringent measures were included and subsequent legislation that has given states more authority to collect child support.

Selection of Sample: The study covers states in Federal Region V (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin). They have been selected because 18% of the national population resides in these states. Federal Region V states also represent 24.3% of all child support cases. For fiscal year 1994 out of $10 billion collected in child support, Federal Region V states collected $2.6 billion which represents 27% of the total collections; these states established 112,245 paternities, 19% of all paternities established (N=590,819); established 204,187 support orders 20% of all support orders established (N=1,023,292); and located 436,596 noncustodial parents, 11% of all noncustodial parents located (N=4,104,349). Thus, performance trends in these states are likely to approximate the trend in the other states as well.

Sources of Data: Data for this study were collected from numerous secondary sources: Current Population Surveys on Child

**Definition and Operationalization of Variables:** Child support policies enacted from 1988 to the present primarily focus on four issues; the location of noncustodial parents, the establishment of paternity, the establishment of child support orders, and the collection of child support obligations. Location of parent refers to retrieving the noncustodial parents current home address or place of employment. The state and federal agencies most often contacted to trace noncustodial parents are the Social Security Administration, Internal Revenue Services, Department of Labor and State Employment Services, Veterans Affairs, Department of Motor Vehicles, and utility companies. Paternity establishment refers to the determination of fatherhood either by voluntary acknowledgment or by adjudication of the courts or an administrative agency on the basis of the matching genetic codes. The child support award refers to monthly monetary amount determined by courts that is owed to a custodial parent or to the IV-D agency. The total amount of child support collected is the gross amount received from the noncustodial parent. Child support collections are primarily deducted from the following sources automatically: wages, state tax refund, federal tax refund, and unemployment compensation. In Federal Region V states most incomes of noncustodial parents can be used for child support including lottery winnings, dividends paid on stocks or bonds and rent from property. The states' demographic and economic conditions may have an influence on child support enforcement, such as total population and the number of unemployed men. States with large populations also tend to have a large number of child support cases. In addition, annual caseloads per child support worker and state expenditures on child support enforcement may also affect a states' performance. These four factors were used as independent variables in a linear regression model to determine if they had a significant impact on the number of noncustodial parents located, paternity and support orders established, and the amount of child support collected within each state.
Analysis of Data and Findings

To determine if the child support legislation enacted after 1988 had an effect on the four dependent variables: noncustodial parents located, paternity and support order establishment, and the total amount of child support payments collected, a series of graphs were developed to illustrate fluctuations within each state for both periods: (1984–1988) and (1989–1994). Because each state operates its own child support agency variations may occur uniquely in that state. Prior to 1987 states were not mandated to report the number of paternities and support orders established for AFDC and non-AFDC cases separately. Therefore, the amounts given for 1984–1987 represent AFDC and non-AFDC clients. In 1991, states began to report the number of noncustodial parents located for AFDC and non-AFDC clients separately. Thus the figures for 1984–1990 represent noncustodial parents located for both AFDC and non-AFDC clients.

In Illinois the number of noncustodial parents located, the number of paternity and support orders established and the total amount of child support collected has remained relatively constant, except in 1990 when a record 135,290 noncustodial parents were located. This figure appears extremely high; however, state officials verified this number as accurate. One may expect that the increase of this magnitude would also cause paternity and support orders’ establishment to rise for fiscal year 1990. However, the number of paternities established declined by 15% in 1990, while the number of support orders established remained constant. There was a slight increase in the amount of child support collected for both AFDC and non-AFDC cases in the state.

The number of noncustodial parents located in 1991 in Illinois dropped to 43,305, a decrease of 68% and the number of child support orders declined by 39%. From 1992–1994 the number of noncustodial parents located, paternity and support orders established has fluctuated every year. However, the amount of child support collected has steadily increased during both periods. The number of noncustodial parents located had the greatest impact on child support orders established in 1990. The data discussed above are given in graphs 1–6.
Graph 1
*Noncustodial Parents Located in Illinois from 1984–1994*

Graph 2
*Number of Paternities Established in Illinois from 1984–1994*

Graph 3
*Number of Support Orders Established in Illinois from 1984–1994*

Indiana, like Illinois has experienced consistent fluctuations in both periods. In 1992, Indiana located 12,334 noncustodial parents, after which there has been a steady decline in the location of noncustodial parents. The number of paternities being established has continued to decline since 1989, while the number of support orders established and the amount of child support being
collected has steadily increased for both AFDC and Non-AFDC cases since 1989. Thus, the amount of child support collected seems to be affected by the number of support orders established see graphs 7-12.

The state of Michigan has had the most dramatic short term fluctuations compared to the other states in Federal Region V.
For instance, in 1990 Michigan reported locating 203,529 non-custodial parents and establishing 154,348 child support orders. However, the following year, the number of noncustodial parents located declined to 67,949 and the number of support orders established decreased to 36,661. Even with all of the fluctuations
in the number of noncustodial parents located, paternity and support establishment, the amount of child support collected for both AFDC and Non-AFDC cases continued to rise. Data in graphs 13–18 show the change in each area.
Minnesota located a record 25,894 noncustodial parents in 1992 which was an increase of 191%, from 1991. However, in 1993 there was a decrease of 70% in the number of noncustodial parents located. In 1991 the number of paternities established reached 7,356 which was an increase of 37% from 1990. However,
Graph 16
AFDC and Non AFDC Child Support Cases in Michigan from 1984–1994

Graph 17
AFDC and Non AFDC Cases in which a Child Support Payment was Collected in Michigan from 1984–1994

Graph 18
Total Amount of Child Support Collected for AFDC and Non AFDC Cases in which a Payment was Collected in Michigan from 1984–1994
paternity establishment decreased by 57% in 1992, followed by a 32% decrease in 1993, then an increase of 128% in 1994. There is a two-year pattern of fluctuation. The number of support orders established has been increasing since 1990. The amount of child support being collected for AFDC and non-AFDC cases has continued to increase. The data summarized here are given in graphs 19–24.

Graph 19
Noncustodial Parents Located in Minnesota from 1984–1994

Graph 20
Number of Paternities Established in Minnesota from 1984–1994

Graph 21
Number of Support Orders Established in Minnesota from 1984–1994
The state of Ohio has been the most successful state in regards to the number of noncustodial parents located, paternity and support orders established, and the amount of child support collected for AFDC and Non-AFDC cases. There has been a steady increase in all areas since 1988. The data in graphs 25–30 show these trends in both periods.
Graph 25
Noncustodial Parents Located in Ohio from 1984–1994

Graph 26
Number of Paternities Established in Ohio from 1984–1994

Graph 27
Number of Support Orders Established in Ohio from 1984–1994
Graph 28
AFDC and Non AFDC Child Support Cases in Ohio from 1984–1994

Graph 29
AFDC and Non AFDC Cases Resulting in the Collection of a Child Support Payment in Ohio from 1984–1994

Graph 30
Total Amount of Child Support Collected for AFDC and Non AFDC Cases in which a Payment was Collected in Ohio from 1984–1994
In Wisconsin the only area of fluctuation was in the number of noncustodial parents located. In 1992, Wisconsin reported locating 38,137 noncustodial parents, which declined to 21,498 in 1993. The state has achieved a steady increase in the number of paternity and support orders and the amount of support collected for AFDC and Non-AFDC cases. The data are presented in graphs 31–36.

In regards to the number of child support cases there has been a consistent increase in AFDC and Non-AFDC cases in Federal Region V states. In Indiana and Wisconsin the caseload per employee has steadily risen, even though more full-time employees have been hired each year. Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio have hired more employees to reduce caseloads. However, the

Graph 31
Noncustodial Parents Located in Wisconsin from 1984–1994

Graph 32
Number of Paternities Established in Wisconsin from 1984–1994
Graph 33
Number of Support Orders Established in Wisconsin from 1984–1994

Graph 34
AFDC and Non AFDC Child Support Cases in Wisconsin from 1984–1994

Graph 35
Number of Child Support Orders Established in Wisconsin from 1984–1994
average number of paternity and support orders established per employee has not risen. The amount of child support collected per employee varies by state. Indiana is the only state that has continued to increase the amount of support collected for the entire eleven year period. The data described above are given in tables 1–7.

Table 1


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Illinois</th>
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<th>Indiana</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>Michigan</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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<td>340,755</td>
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### Table 1, continued

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<td>931,463</td>
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### Table 2

**Number of Child Support Workers in Federal Region V from 1984–1994**

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<th>% Change</th>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>521</td>
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Table 3

*Child Support Cases Per Child Support Employees from 1984–1994*

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### Table 4


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*continued*
Table 4, continued

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<th>% Change</th>
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### Table 5
**Average Number of Paternities Established Per Employee in Federal Region V from 1984–1994**

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### Table 6
**Average Number of Support Orders Established Per Employee in Federal Region V from 1984–1994**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Michigan</th>
<th>Minnesota</th>
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<th>Wisconsin</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1987</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
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</table>
Even though states have been locating parents, establishing paternity and support orders for children receiving AFDC, the number of support orders established and child support payments collected from noncustodial parents of the AFDC children are low, compared to the orders established and amounts collected from Non-AFDC custodial parents. This may be because noncustodial parents of AFDC children are often low wage earners, unemployed, or derive income from illegal activities or receive cash payments for their services which cannot be ascertained for child support orders and payment. Due to their unstable income they do not meet their monthly child support obligation (Dubey, 1995). The child support payment collected on behalf of the Non-AFDC cases goes directly to the family, while payments for AFDC families go to the state except for $50.00. Thus, noncustodial parents of the children who are not on welfare may be more willing to comply with child support policies.

It was argued that each states' unique characteristics may affect the states' performance in enforcing child support policies. The variables whose influences that are measurable for both periods are (1) the total population, (2) the number of unemployed men 16 years of age and over, (3) annual caseloads of child support workers, and (4) state expenditures on child support enforcement. These factors are used as independent variables in a linear regression model. Such factors as the number of children born out-of-wedlock, the custodial and noncustodial parents age, income and educational level may also affect child support enforcement within each state. However, these factors are not included in the linear regression model due to the unavailability of data for the entire eleven year period. The expression of regression model is provided below.

\[ y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \beta_4x_4 \]

\( x_1 = \) total state population; \( x_2 = \) unemployed men; \( x_3 = \) child support cases per full-time employee; \( x_4 = \) state expenditures on child support enforcement

The results of the linear regression revealed that only population size had a significant effect on the location of noncustodial parents in Ohio, (r=.9391) In Illinois and Michigan the total
population size had an influence on paternity establishment. In Indiana and Ohio state expenditures on child support enforcement and the size of the population had an effect on paternity establishment. In Wisconsin, none of the independent variables had a significant effect on paternity establishment.

The independent variables did not have an effect on the number of support orders established in any state in Federal Region V. State expenditures on child support enforcement and total population size had an effect on child support collections, in all other states in the region, except in Wisconsin. Child support employees’ caseloads and the number of unemployed men age 16 years and over did not have significant impact on the dependent variables. Data in tables 7–8 show the influence of the population size, unemployed men, and state expenditures for the eleven-year period. Table 10 has data on the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable within each state.

Summary of the Findings and Implications

The findings of this study indicate that stringent measures do not seem to have a consistent impact on the outcome of child support enforcement. States vary among themselves and do not show any consistent trend in respect to outcome measures: location of noncustodial parents, establishment of paternity and

Table 7

State Populations in Federal Region V States from 1984–1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Illinois</th>
<th>Indiana</th>
<th>Michigan</th>
<th>Minnesota</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
<th>Wisconsin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>11,412,132</td>
<td>5,458,322</td>
<td>9,049,452</td>
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<td>4,735,563</td>
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<td>10,734,926</td>
<td>4,747,767</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5,454,108</td>
<td>9,127,775</td>
<td>4,205,212</td>
<td>10,730,268</td>
<td>4,755,618</td>
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<td>5,491,735</td>
<td>9,217,998</td>
<td>4,296,166</td>
<td>10,798,552</td>
<td>4,822,388</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>11,409,782</td>
<td>5,523,693</td>
<td>9,253,295</td>
<td>4,338,057</td>
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<td>4,856,574</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11,446,801</td>
<td>5,555,019</td>
<td>9,310,677</td>
<td>4,387,209</td>
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<td>4,902,197</td>
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<td>1991</td>
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<td>5,602,878</td>
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<td>10,929,391</td>
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<td>4,995,952</td>
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<td>5,706,597</td>
<td>9,453,250</td>
<td>4,525,647</td>
<td>11,059,480</td>
<td>5,045,362</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>11,734,164</td>
<td>5,750,033</td>
<td>9,486,335</td>
<td>4,572,360</td>
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Child Support

Table 8

Unemployed Men Age 16 and Over in Federal Region V States from 1984–1994

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<th>Wisconsin</th>
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<td>78,000</td>
<td>265,000</td>
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<td>261,000</td>
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</tr>
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<td>72,000</td>
<td>212,000</td>
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<td>70,000</td>
<td>175,000</td>
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<td>152,000</td>
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Table 9


<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Expenditures</th>
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<th>AFDC</th>
<th>Non-AFDC</th>
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<td>$18,589,182</td>
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continued
### Child Support Expenditures in Indiana from 1984–1994

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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### Child Support Expenditures in Michigan from 1984–1994

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<th>Non-AFDC</th>
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*continued*
### Child Support Expenditures in Minnesota from 1984–1994

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<th>Non-AFDC</th>
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</table>

### Child Support Expenditures in Ohio from 1984–1994

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Expenditures</th>
<th>Cost-Effectiveness</th>
<th>AFDC</th>
<th>Non-AFDC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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*continued*
support orders and the collection of child support amounts in these two periods. Each state has experienced fluctuations in both periods in respect to the outcome measures. The findings also show that child support policies seem to be more effective in collecting child support from the noncustodial parents of children not receiving welfare. The states' population, unemployed men, size of caseloads and expenditures on child support enforcement did not reveal any consistent pattern of impact.

Child support policies do not seem to alter the target groups' behavior. Neither deterrence nor shame and embarrassment seem to affect child support policies. Noncustodial parents of children not receiving welfare, deterrence and shame may be responsible for compliance. Noncustodial parents of children on welfare do not appear to be affected.

Laws are effective if they are obeyed and are able to alter the target groups' behavior. Therefore, stringent child support enforcement policies are effective with the noncustodial parents who have the means to pay their support obligation, but not with the poor unemployed fathers. Incarcerating resourceless noncustodial parents would cause the states to furnish housing, food,
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security, medical, and recreation. Reducing a low wage earner’s income by garnishing a portion of their salary for a child support obligation may force the noncustodial parent to seek state assistance. These two approaches would not be cost-effective to the state. Therefore, laws aimed at deterring non-compliance may not have an effect on low wage earners and unemployed noncustodial parents. Noncustodial parents that reside in a community where it is common to father children by several different women and then relinquish financial responsibility to mother, shame and embarrassment would not have an impact. Noncustodial parents that fall into this category do not obey any laws that they feel are infringing upon their lifestyle. Therefore, these noncustodial parents may deliberately defy anything associated with a government institution or societal norms.

Therefore, child support policies should focus on giving noncustodial parents the opportunity to help custodial parents through in-kind services such as providing child care or participating in parenting programs. This may foster a closer relationship between noncustodial parents which in turn may encourage them to seek employment or a higher paying job. In addition, child support policies need to focus on training and educating noncustodial parents which will allow them an opportunity to earn income and share their financial responsibility toward their children.

The legislation enacted after 1988 has increased societies’ awareness of the financial crisis facing children and that tougher child support enforcement is a good strategy for reducing child poverty and reducing welfare dependency. Though, the legislation has not had a significant impact on child support collections for families dependent on AFDC, yet the number of noncustodial parents located, paternity and support orders established for this population has increased, thus making the child support enforcement process easier to enforce in the future. The legislation has helped non-AFDC families collect child support which may have reduced the number of families that would have needed welfare.

References


The number of social work doctoral dissertations following qualitative research methods tripled in the ten year period from 1982 to 1992. The purpose of the current study was to understand the qualitative research process of 54 social work dissertations completed between 1986 and 1993. The two general reasons for following a qualitative design were the researcher's dissatisfaction with current theory to explain the studied phenomena and the desire to implement participant driven research. Much was written by the dissertation authors about the place of theory in qualitative research and the mutual influences between the researcher and researched. The study results were discussed within the context of current qualitative/quantitative debates in social work. This is an important study for graduate faculty and students as qualitative research methods are being required in graduate social work education and more is being published on the expected standards of qualitative research.

Introduction and Research Purpose

This is both an exciting and a confusing time for social workers who are considering the use of qualitative research. The excitement stems from the recent publication of two edited texts which provide systematic, empirical applications of qualitative research conducted by social workers (Riessman, 1994; Sherman & Reid, 1994). The confusion comes from critiques of whether qualitative research is a valid approach to science (Bloom, 1995; Wakefield, 1995; Wakefield & Kirk, 1996) and whether there should be one set of standards that applies to the scientific rigor of all social...
work research, qualitative or quantitative (Imre, 1994; Mullen, 1995; Reid, 1994).

Qualitative studies often include first-person disclosures of the politics, awareness, and new discoveries of the research process. Qualitative research is a perspective (Ruckdeschel, 1985), a world view, a philosophy of knowledge building. "Beliefs about the nature of social reality and how we are to know it (ontology and epistemology) shape which method we choose, which questions we ask, and what counts as knowledge" (Riessman, 1994, p. xii). A qualitative perspective recognizes that the researcher is the primary research instrument and that documenting the interaction between the researcher and participants is an integral component of the knowledge generating process (Ruckdeschel, 1985; Ruckdeschel, Earnshaw, & Firrek, 1994).

The purpose of the current study is to respond to the need for more detailed discussion of the qualitative research process (Allen-Meares, 1995; Imre, 1994; Riessman, 1994). How do persons conduct qualitative research within the context of the current qualitative/quantitative discussions in social work? The purposive sample for this study consisted of 54 qualitative research dissertations in social work published between January 1, 1986 and December 31, 1993. Dissertations were chosen for the current analysis because they typically contain much detail about the research process, the authors may be immersed in the academic debates surrounding qualitative research, and many doctoral students might be using qualitative research for the first time after being trained primarily in quantitative methods. Like Hyde's (1994) "reflection on a journey", this study aimed to help the reader "gain insight into the research enterprise and assurances from revelations of an imperfect process" (p. 170).

I was drawn to qualitative research for the first time during my doctoral studies in social work. One of the difficulties for me was to unlearn the assumptions of quantitative research approaches. For example, my lengthy reflective journals documenting the relationship between emerging themes, theories, researcher bias, and research decisions were dissonant with the belief that all efforts should be taken to control researcher objectivity. Describing how the credibility and trustworthiness of the data were achieved by analyzing research journals, consulting with peer debriefers
to critique initial data analysis, discussing the results with the participants, or applying other sound methods of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were very different tasks than those demonstrating that the methodology achieved validity and reliability by consistently measuring the hypothesized variables.

My first exposure to qualitative research was a philosophy of science course which gave thorough discussion to the difference between positivist and post-positivist paradigms of research (Lather, 1986, 1991). "A paradigm is a worldview, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world" (Patton, 1990). A positivist paradigm represents the position that social science can create experimental conditions where the researcher is totally removed from any influence on the expected outcomes of the study. A study meets empirical rigor if it follows the rules which assume that the experimental conditions were present. A post-positivist paradigm recognizes that there is a mutual relationship between the knower and the known. Rather than trying to control researcher subjectivity, a post-positivist researcher recognizes her/his biases of the research questions (Lather, 1991). Heineman [Pieper] (1981) pointed out the following limitations of positivism, which she termed logical empiricism: "The adoption of the logical empiricist view of science has had the grave consequence of prohibiting researchers from studying many important questions, using much valuable data, and researching social interactions in all their complexities" (p. 390).

I conducted a qualitative research dissertation because I was drawn to the philosophical views of science underlying a post-positivist paradigm even though I was a beginner at understanding such a paradigm. I propose that many graduate students and social workers choose not to use qualitative research because conveying the epistemological clarity of the study is so difficult even when the research problem might warrant a qualitative research design. Other doctoral students in social work who conducted qualitative research dissertations have much to share about the complexities of embracing a qualitative research perspective. By shedding light on some of the issues and struggles faced in these
dissertations, more social worker graduate students and practitioners may choose to master the use of qualitative research.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study of qualitative studies. The purpose of this study is to understand the qualitative research process as it was written by authors of selected dissertations in social work and to analyze these data within the context of current discussions in social work about qualitative research. The published dissertations were the primary source of data. A purposive sampling method was chosen to locate dissertations in which the authors would provide an in-depth discussion of the rationales for choosing a qualitative design and the issues they faced when doing qualitative research.

The University of Michigan International (UMI) Dissertation Abstracts CD-ROM was the data base used for this study. Conducting a search of dissertation abstracts containing the words “social work and qualitative” during the time period of January 1, 1988 to September 1, 1993 resulted in 229 abstracts. This number included studies which used only qualitative methods as well as those which used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The same search for the previous five year time period (January 1, 1982 to December 31, 1987) only resulted in 71 abstracts, another indicator of the increased attention given to qualitative research in social work.

For the time period from January 1, 1988 to September 1, 1993, a search of the UMI data base was done to locate social work dissertation abstracts which contained the terms “qualitative research”, “qualitative study”, or “qualitative analysis”. Dissertations were only chosen from persons receiving a DSW or Ph.D. from a School or College of Social Work in the United States. This process generated twenty-five abstracts.

One limitation to this sampling method was that a person could have conducted a qualitative study but not have identified this research approach in the dissertation title or abstract. To address this limitation, a second abstract search was conducted by using the Find command to match “social work and” the following key words: feminist, interpretive, naturalistic, or ethnography, because qualitative research is often conducted within these
research paradigms. Twenty-five new studies not contained in the original sample were now generated for analysis.

A third abstract search was conducted to include possible qualitative studies across cultures. Using the key words "social work and" Afrocentric, African American, Black, multicultural, race, or culture generated four more studies which did utilize a qualitative research design. One of these studies was actually published in 1986. This study (Colorado, 1986) was kept in the sample because it was the only study to focus on Native Americans and it provided rich, descriptive data about the research process. The cultures of the participants and researchers across all 54 studies included India, Native America, Central America, African American, Korea, and China.

Statements in the dissertation which explained the reason for using qualitative research were highlighted. In general, these statements were usually one to three paragraphs for each study (a much smaller amount than predicted) and were often taken from the Methods section. Two research assistants then entered the highlighted data into the Ethnograph software on an IBM computer. This software allowed for sorting of the rationales for qualitative research according to common patterns across all 54 studies.

There were ten dissertations which provided much more detail about the qualitative research process than the other dissertations in the study. Discussion of these issues were dispersed throughout the Introduction, Methodology, and Summary sections of the dissertations. Content from these ten studies related to the interaction between the researcher and the participants and the place of theory in the study was highlighted in the text. The highlighted data were then entered into the computer software. Common themes were identified using theoretical coding analyses suggested by Strauss & Corbin (1990). I kept conceptual memos of emerging themes. Additionally, I continually questioned whether the assumptions that underlied the meaning of the codes related to the research problem (Tyson, 1992).

This study followed a constructivist paradigm of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guha, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I was expecting that dissertation authors would discuss how the interactions with the participants and the data created new constructions of the studied phenomena. Thus, some qualitative research
studies may have been omitted because the authors did not write about the researcher/participant interaction. Also, I constructed my study through my reading of the dissertations without speaking directly to the authors. The peer reviewer and I did not feel it was necessary to interview the authors, because we were expecting to find clear and detailed discussion of the paradigms guiding the qualitative research process.

I also followed a heuristic paradigm of social work (Tyson, 1992; Heineman [Pieper], 1981) which focuses on the choices I made in data collection and data analysis related to the research problem. I organized the dissertation data according to themes grounded from the dissertations (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Then, I utilized these descriptions to try to untangle current issues debated in social work about qualitative research. The current research goal is mine, not necessarily that of the dissertation authors. The value of the sample selection is in bringing together several different perspectives of using qualitative research. The analysis at the end of this paper only pertains to the research questions I posed. A more thorough analysis of other important knowledge gained from the dissertations, such as comparing the methodologies used, would constitute another study.

The consultation of another social worker who had conducted qualitative research was utilized to discuss sampling, coding, and interpretation decisions. A thorough log documenting research decisions was kept. Preliminary findings of this study received analytical and theoretical feedback from other qualitative researchers when presented at a conference on clinical social work and qualitative research.

Findings

The Findings section is organized according to three categories. Why Qualitative Research? contains the themes, Understanding the Participants' Lived Experiences and questions That Don't Fit Current Theories. The category, Wrestling with Theory, describes the paradigms guiding the qualitative research process. The final category is, Researcher/Participant Interactions, and includes the themes, Researcher's Lived Experiences, Insider or Outsider?, and Empowerment.
Why Qualitative Research?

Two common reasons were given to justify that the research question should be analyzed through qualitative research: because it offers a better understanding of the participants' lived experiences related to the studied question and because the current state of knowledge does not explain the studied phenomena.

Understanding the Participants' Lived Experiences. Participants' experiences, subjective meanings, and contexts were encouraged and included in the knowledge built from qualitative research. In a study of teenage parents and the prevention of child sexual abuse, Snavely (1991) was "open to understand the teen mother’s attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors from her own frame of reference rather than one imposed by the investigator" (52). Sandell's (1993) study of feminist social workers supported "the feminist perspective that women's experiences, ideas and needs can be legitimately valued in their own right" (68). Greenlee (1992), in his naturalistic inquiry into rural poverty, discovered "the subjective meaning and multiple realities of the problems that the working poor encounter in their daily lives" (33). In a study of Black teen mother’s perspectives on pregnancy and childbearing, Williams (1989) concluded that "listening to teen mothers and putting their actions in the context of their upbringing is a neglected aspect of the teenage parenting issue" (176).

There are many benefits for social work practice generated by actively including the participants' perspectives in the research process. Glynn (1991) stated that the vignettes created from women who self-identified as being infertile "admonish those dealing with infertile women to cease confusing them with those who elect childlessness" (384). Peled (1993) interviewed children who witnessed woman abuse about the children's experiences of living with this violence and discovered that the research process was empowering for the children. "We give them a message that what they think is important for us and that they have valuable things to teach" (228). Shepherd (1990) saw the study of organizational structure in a shelter for battered women as creating "mutual learning for both the subject and the researcher" (18).

Qualitative research methods bring the researcher in direct interaction with the participants which aids in understanding
the complexities of human behavior. In a study of caseworkers in India, Ejaz (1988) stated, “the social sciences have searched for respectability and ‘white collar’ status in the modern professional fields by adopting methods which are logical and defensible, but which often prove to be inadequate measures of complex human behavior and interaction” (69). And Bagwe (1989) affirmed a similar position in her study of women caste in India. “It is my hope that academic work particularly in the humanities and social sciences will increasingly evolve as a process of more human sharing and identification with the ‘subjects,’ in a departure from the earlier tradition of the neo-colonialists’ fragmented view of the ‘Martians;’ and that artificial walls in intellectual enterprise will be dissolved in favor of a more holistic, humanizing approach to understanding complex schema” (25).

Questions That Don’t Fit Current Theories. Several persons asserted that the current state of knowledge did not address the research question they were investigating. More importantly, current theories guided social work interventions and policies which were confining and oppressive toward the persons social workers intended to help. From Wright’s (1991) study of being lesbian in a heterosexist culture came the acknowledgment that “a lack of agreement about operational definitions was particularly noteworthy since it demonstrates that no one really knows who fits into the category ‘lesbian’ or ‘homosexual’” (63–64). Colorado (1986) used a research design that was “bicultural and qualitative. This makes sense; Indian alcoholism occurs in bicultural context and the research to have validity must address the needs of both Indian and non-Indian scientific communities” (193). Morrell (1990) began her study of women who intentionally chose childlessness with a critique of developmental theories which assume all partnered women desire to have children. “Unconscious or uncritical acceptance of a pro-mothering stance leads therapists, even with the best of intentions, to undermine the reproductive self-determination of their women clients” (4–5).

Knowledge building from the qualitative research process emerged from a thick description of the research focus that would not be captured from quantitative analysis. Rycraft (1990), in his study of public child welfare workers, stated “the use of a qualita-
tive design lent itself to the discovery of unpredicted and context-related findings as it allowed for the capture of the breadth, depth, and fabric of employee retention" (67–68). Goodman (1990) studied staff perspectives of caring for terminally-ill clients in an acute care hospital and recognized the value of qualitative methods "in describing a social reality with empirical richness and in generating—not testing—hypotheses" (90). Describing Chinese ethnic organizations in California, Wang (1993) concluded, "although some of the observations made can be translated into numbers, the organizations themselves are organic and display attitudes and behaviors which cannot be quantified" (32).

Wrestling with Theory

One challenge for the doctoral student researchers was how to achieve a balance between presenting the participants' lived experiences and connecting these experiences to what is known about the research question. How does a researcher interact with the theories she/he brings to the setting and stay open to new explanations drawn from the interactions with the participants?

One response was to reflect on the influence of a priori theories the researcher brought to the study. For example, Peled (1993) explained, "two substantive theories, resiliency and symbolic interaction, influenced my interest in certain aspects of children's experience of witnessing violence, and thus, 'biased' the research" (34). Goodman (1990) described discrepancies between the initial literature review and the knowledge generated from the participants. "As these discrepancies became apparent, I was able to reframe some of the formulations developed for this project, and track down the sources of these changes" (94).

Viewing the literature review as data led to new interpretations of the other data collected in the studies. Colorado (1986) noted that her study marked "an important change in Diné alcohol literature. From this point, Diné would be recognized as contemporary human beings, not as archaeological artifacts. We would continue to be seen as people with emotion, intellect, and as being subject to social pressures" (28). Wright (1991) inquired how lesbians interviewed in her study would respond to theories which place heterosexist culture as the norm. "Viewing these findings in light of the clinical literature, it is striking the degree to
which the earlier theory and research on lesbians was reflective of
the same cultural attitudes that the research participants believe
still exist” (189). Bagwe (1989) also discovered unexpected results.
“A second major contribution of this study, particularly in terms
of feminist research, is the finding that the men are also oppressed
by the women themselves, in many subtle or overt ways of manip-
ulative dehumanization. While the earth is slipping from under
the feet of the rural poor, the wages of patriarchy are just as harsh
against individual disenfranchised men, as against women” (479–
480).

Researchers also wrestled with conveying the rigor of the find-
ings. Here are the steps three researchers took not to let standards
of traditional science obstruct the knowledge developed from the
participants’ perspectives. “For Indian Science to have validity,
it must be based on truth found by the individual who follows a
certain sequence of truth-seeking ways. In this research, I have fol-
lowed these ways: Pipe, Sweat Lodge, Peyote Ceremonies, Vision
Fast” (Colorado, 1986, 195). “However, without generalizing and
risking the danger of stereotyping, we are left with the alternative
of doing nothing, ignoring differences, and treating all alike as if
the ‘melting pot’ phenomenon was a reality. . . . This sample does
not purport to be representative of all West Indian families but
it is the social and cultural realities of all the families presented
from their world view and has significance and importance within
its own context” (Thrasher, 1988, 187–188). “One limitation to
the study was the research instrument. What I have told and
interpreted was what I saw and understood. Another person,
an American, a woman, a minority person, a Native American
would see differently and tell the story differently. Just as my own
biography framed the question so has it framed the interpretation.
It must always be that” (McMahon, 1993, 70).

Researcher/Participant Interaction

“The role of the researcher in any qualitative project is so
important a variable that the researcher’s social position and
relationship must be taken into account” (Thrasher, 1988, 47).
Why do qualitative researchers assert that the subjective positions
of the researcher need to be taken into account? The main reason
is that the researcher needs to explain how she/he arrived at
understanding the participants' experiences within the explanations produced by science. Three areas are discussed here: the influence of the researcher's lived experience on the study; the impact that being an insider or outsider has on the study; and achieving the goal of participant and researcher empowerment through qualitative research.

**Researcher's Lived Experiences.** Researchers' own rich life experiences are part of the research context. "I begin with the 'given' that my view, much as I wish it to be free of *a priori* theory, free to 'neutrally' process the data I will collect, is already clouded with my own life perspective" (Glynn, 1991, 81). Work experience in child welfare with Aboriginal Australians "shaped my interest in how child welfare workers understand their practice and why I wanted to study workers with Indian clients" (McMahon's (1993), 9). "Certainly in my case, the fact that I am intentionally childless makes the dissertation personally compelling as well as intellectually engaging" (Morell, 1990, 62). "Finally, I live the life. The issues in this dissertation are my social context. Indian people reviewing it will know" (Colorado, 1986, 196).

Reflection on the changes in the researcher as a result of conducting the study led to new knowledge. Bagwe's (1989) ethnographic study of women in India led to a global connection of women's experiences. "We often overlook the fact that even our own lives are subject to an equally distressing situation all over the world; it is the personal validation of our individual choices that leads to a reaffirmation of our essential humanity" (479). Some participants of Butler's (1991) study of homeless middle-aged women viewed Butler as "part of the system that was oppressing them". "I feel some discomfort about having dropped into their lives for six months and then totally removed myself. I am grappling with the feelings that come with the recognition that I have in fact exploited these women as objects of knowledge" (208–209). "Through this placement in an Indian alcohol program, I would come to face myself and embark on a course of culture and spiritual revitalization, in short, a decolonization which is this dissertation" (Colorado, 1986, 194).

**Insider or Outsider?** One common issue discussed by several researchers was the impact on the study of being an insider or
outsider to the participants' lives. Peled (1993) felt that being an outsider "freed the children to confide with me information they wouldn't want to disclose to someone who is more a part of their world. On the other hand, it may have also deterred some children from sharing their private worlds" (51). Bagwe (1989) moved from a position of outsider to insider. "At a certain stage the force of circumstances ensured that I gave up being an outsider, to simply take over the persona of a village woman—from an unabashedly privileged position compared to poor farm women who became friends and family" (18).

Again, awareness of the issues related to being viewed as an insider or outsider led to new knowledge. Below is an excerpt taken from Smith's (1990) study of Black adolescent fathers.

"This writer, as well as many Black colleagues, have discussed shifting into a "white people mode" at work or at school. This implies greater vigilance and a conscious adaptation of the style of the larger culture. This writer has always experienced it as pulling a shade over one's most essential self. This project assumes that this habit of concealment, of "not putting one's business in the street" is an issue to be dealt with whenever research is conducted in the Black community. In fact, it is as much an issue for Black researchers as well as white researchers, because unless you are known and trusted by the local community, your role as researcher makes you suspect as part of the white power structure. Ultimately, however, it is easier for Black researchers with a similar background to overcome this adaptive hypervigilance" (Smith, 1989, 62-63).

Empowerment. For some researchers empowerment of the persons studied was an achieved goal. "I believe that my applause and affirmation of the women when they told me of the actions they had taken in their lives to deal with oppressive situations were empowering. I also believe my acknowledgment and confirmation of their feelings of discrimination was also empowering on some level.... The final theme, political awareness, gives hope for collective action by older, homeless-and near homeless-women to demand fairer and more humane social policies" (Butler, 1991, 208-212).

Glynn (1991) posited that participant awareness of issues was by itself empowering. "Clinical social workers might focus
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on a practice definition of power that obviates the notion of ‘power over’ and substitutes the idea of empowerment based on expanded awareness, conscious decision-making, and grounded in a whole person approach” (385).

Theoretical and applied implications of the qualitative research process can be empowering to future clients. “This research documents the existence of violence in the lives of many lesbian women. From a social work perspective, it is less important to count numbers of cases, than to provide treatment effectively to persons seeking treatment for the problem of violence. Typically social workers, even those who identify themselves as lesbian or as feminist, are not informed about lesbian battering” (Groves, 1991, 201). “This study of intentionally childless women, breaking as it does the woman=mother equation, hopefully will contribute to making women’s choices more possible. If it does, even in the most modest way, the labor involved has been worth the effort” (Morell, 1990, 242).

Discussion and Implications

I began this analysis of 54 doctoral dissertations using qualitative research by stating that qualitative research has been questioned as a valid approach to science and that there is a call for setting standards of rigor for conducting qualitative research. The dissertations, qualitative research texts (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and recent anthologies of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Riessman, 1994; Sherman & Reid, 1994) are filled with evidence that qualitative research is indeed systematic, empirical science. With this increased credibility of qualitative research coming from its application across disciplines has also come discrepancies on how to promote theoretical and methodological clarity, which brings us full circle to the discussion of standards for evaluating qualitative research.

The Unifying Nature of the Term, Qualitative Research

Throughout this study I have conceptualized qualitative research as a perspective or world view (Ruckdeschel, 1985) which brings persons together who entered the qualitative research
process from a post-positivist paradigm. I use the term, post-positivist "to refer to paradigms that represent genuine breaks with the positivist tradition" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, 46). A positivist perspective is a belief that the interaction between researcher and participant can be objective. It is a world view that holds that methodology can achieve controls on researcher bias. Proper methodology then becomes the criteria for determining scientific rigor.

The dissertation samples analyzed in this study illustrated that a qualitative or post-positivist research process itself involves the intricacies of human interaction. The researcher's past work and lived experiences were discussed as these experiences enhanced the researchers' understanding of the participants. The struggle with one's own influence on the data was integrated rather than isolated from the construction of knowledge. Several authors discussed the perception of being an insider or outsider to the participants' environment and how this affected the study results. In many studies the research settings were the social service agency and/or the clients' environments. Recognizing the power the researcher had on the researched led to understanding the power the social worker has on clients. Researchers and practitioners can utilize qualitative research methods to follow the client's lead toward problem resolution. These methods may include checking our interpretations of the data with the client and asking for feedback from clients and other social workers who support and question theories generated from the study.

I realize that not all qualitative research is post-positivist. "Qualitative research is frequently equated erroneously with new (post-positivist) research paradigms, while quantitative research is used mistakenly as a synonym for the standard (positivist) research paradigm" (Heineman Pieper, 1994, 73). I acknowledge that by equating "qualitative research" with post-positivism I have omitted studies which use qualitative methods from a positivist position. I recognize that the metatheory of a heuristic paradigm can be inclusive of qualitative research across paradigms (Heineman Pieper, 1994; Tyson, 1994).

In my early development of understanding and using qualitative research I needed to place the research process in dichotomous terms. "Philosophy forces us to locate the assump-
tions about reality and knowing that undergrid the research methods we choose” (Riessman, 1994, xiii). Explaining our assumptions about the qualitative research process can be cumbersome, overly intellectual, and unapproachable when there are differing conceptualizations of the position from which to explain our assumptions. The value of the current study was to demonstrate how other graduate student researchers navigated the philosophical debates of science and research to choose to conduct a qualitative study. An assumption is that the intellectual debates actually become obstacles to learning and applying qualitative research.

I am now at a place where I can hold onto differing discussions of research paradigms, qualitative research methods, and the growing combination of both. I am excited that more social workers are being trained in qualitative research and that more examples of its application across paradigms is being published. I hope this current study has provided “a place for beginning students to discover the world of qualitative research” and has provided examples from a “diversity across research approaches” (Riessman, 1994, xvii).

**Setting Standards to Validate the Credibility of Qualitative Research**

One of the benefits of having a sample from a diversity of research positions was learning the issues various researchers faced in demonstrating the credibility of their results. Credibility refers to documenting the research decisions which resulted in the connections made between the collected data and interpretations of the data. I admit that in the past I have resisted setting a standard for which all research must be judged because I feared that qualitative research would then fall into the limitations of a positivist paradigm—being more concerned with the methodological rules than with the dynamic interchanges between the researcher, researched, and the research question. I also feared that participant-driven research would suffer at the expense of researcher standardization.

Models of evaluating qualitative research designs by giving the researcher guidelines to demonstrate how the results were constructed from the researcher/participant interaction follow basic assumptions of qualitative research (Drisko, 1997; Tyson,
In this current study, I used Drisko's (1997) model to be consistent between my research paradigms, my intended audience, my methods, and my data collection: Following a post-positivist, constructivist paradigm I analyzed data from qualitative doctoral dissertations by constructing themes from the dissertations and placing these themes within the current, growing literature on qualitative research. My intended goal was to help graduate students and faculty understand the intricate interweaving of theory, participant-driven research, and the researcher's position in the qualitative research process.

In this article, the words of other qualitative researchers have been shared to acknowledge the complexities of qualitative research. If we listen to the words and struggles, we will continue to strengthen the application of qualitative research in social work (Imre, 1994). Differences in paradigms supporting qualitative research can actually be inviting rather than obstacles for future qualitative researchers.

References


Twenty female administrators in human service agencies serving diverse ethnic communities were interviewed to provide an understanding of their struggles and leadership styles. Applying both Africentric and feminist theoretical frameworks to inform the political frame advanced in theories of transformational leadership, connecting with community and community building were strategies for providing leadership.

The differences in administrative experiences and styles between men and women generally, and women espousing a feminist philosophy in particular, have gained attention in recent years (Chernesky and Bombyck, 1988). Yet in a time of changing demographics, when many women of color are administrators of human services, there has been a paucity of research on the concerns and contributions of female administrators of color working in community based human service agencies (Daley, 1995). This paper presents the findings from research on the experiences and leadership styles of women administrators, in community-based human service agencies serving communities of color. It is intended to provide information on their experiences connecting with communities as a strategy for leadership. Much of what they said and did reinforces concepts put forth in transformational models of leadership and reflects aspects of feminist and Africentric organizational theory (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Burns, 1978; Gardner, 1989; Gilkes, 1983; Bradford, Soifer & Guttierez, 1994, Dumas, 1993; Hyde, 1989).
The Context

Recognizing the constraints of traditional bureaucratic organizational models and their implications for leadership and organizational functioning, organizational theories emerging over the past twenty years have stressed structures and leadership styles that allow for flexibility and individuation, support the importance of process, emphasize input into decision making, and stress the primacy of social relationships and interactions. There is an emphasis on team that is consistent with community in both Africentric and feminist theories (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Bargal and Schmid, 1989; Bennis, 1983; Burns, 1978; Iannello, 1992; Schiele, 1994; Senge, 1990).

Transformational Leadership. Among the theories that have significantly changed thinking about organizational behavior are those that build on the concepts of transformational leadership. The transformational leader assesses the needs, values and aspirations of his/her followers, is clear about his/her own values, needs, and vision, and acts in a manner that promotes the needs of both (Burns, 1978). There is a recognition of the relationship between the well-being of the individual, the work group, and the larger organization. Recognizing the social context of behavior, this type of leadership supports intellectual stimulation by attending to individual styles and needs for development, while creating a culture in which employees enhance their own satisfaction while working to promote the good of the organization. Consequently, workers are likely to invest more energy and time in the organization than they initially intended.

Support for creative problem-solving takes place in an atmosphere in which mistakes are accepted in the context of team involvement, commitment and support. Leadership reinforces activities that contribute to the vitality of the work community by actively participating followers (workers). The leadership creates an organizational culture based on openness, trust, and respect, and inspires team spirit (Bass and Avolio, 1994, Bass, 1985).

Transformational leadership is empowering and participatory as it promotes input into decision-making, delegation of tasks and responsibility, and fosters local leadership. The context of the leadership and followership is seen as indispensable to
understanding organizational problems and building on individual and group strengths. The acknowledgment of “followership” as a significant and reciprocal role in relation to “leadership” provides a unique organizational insight. Leaders cannot be studied in isolation from followers, constituents, or group members. The leader is a product of group history, culture, and interactions, and is shaped by such. The organization is envisioned as a system of interacting members with shared goals, values, and beliefs working together in a common effort toward mutually agreed on outcomes. The organization as functional community resounds.

Providing insights for organizational analysis, Bolman and Deal (1991) suggest that the complexity of organizations, and the accompanying demands on leaders, be viewed in terms of four frames: 1) the structural frame which addresses the formal organizational structure as outlined on organizational charts and which focuses on formal roles, rules, statuses, and responsibilities; 2) the frame of human resources which takes into account the beliefs, values, needs, and feelings of the workforce; 3) the symbolic frame which drops assumptions of rationality and recognizes that organizations reflect cultures that are driven by rituals, ceremonies, myths, stories, and beliefs; and 4) the political frame which, according to Bolman and Deal, tends to be overlooked and under-researched, focuses on the competition among groups for resources and power. It is seen in both intra- and inter-organizational conflicts, tensions, rivalries, and power struggles.

The following exploratory study addresses leadership strategies and struggles as discussed by women of color as administrators, with attention to the impact of gender and race. Building on transformational leadership theory, it is an attempt to focus on the political frame of analysis discussed by Bolman and Deal (1991) by connecting the values around team building, with the community building tenets of Africentric and feminist organizational approaches, as they provide a context for the strategic behaviors of the respondents. In this context, the workplace can be considered the functional community.

Feminist Influences. Organizational literature on feminist agencies reflects concerns about the agency social structure connecting
with external communities, the nature of interpersonal relationships, and the values around helping. Redefining power, focusing on supportive relationships, and mutual decision-making in an effort to build community within the agency are recurrent themes (Arches and Schneider, 1994). Feminists have developed an organizational leadership model of shared power called the shared administrative model or modified consensus model (Iannello, 1992; Kravitz and Jones, 1988; Perlmutter, 1994; Weil, 1988) which aims at operationalizing community within the social service workplace. This model reflects values of mutual support, interdependence, shared power, and nurturing social relationships (Hyde, 1989; Kravitz and Jones, 1988).

The shared administrators are the providers of the services as well as the decision-makers, the executives, and the fund-raisers. They rotate tasks and regularly “switch hats.” An employee’s talent, experience and/or interest in a particular area will determine the position she holds at any given time. All members contribute to all parts of the organization with power and decision-making coming from the entire group. Daily routine decisions are made in work groups while organizational policy or critical decision-making is brought to the larger group in regularly scheduled meetings with rotating chairs and a mutually defined agenda (Iannello, 1992). The boundaries separating direct service workers and administrators (officially designated leaders and followers) do not exist because shared administrators are both.

In feminist agencies, the traditional notion of team is expanded to include community and consumer groups actively working together on the board, committees, and as volunteers. There is a recognition of the relationship between the personal and political. Consequently, the borders of the workplace go beyond the agency and into the external community.

Africentric Influences. Grounded in African philosophy and cultural values about individual and organizational behavior, this perspective is manifest particularly in policies, technology, and a leadership style that view the individual’s problems as related to the agency and the community (Daley, 1994; Meyers, 1985; Schiele, 1990; Schiele, 1994; Warfield-Coppock, 1995). Based on the recognition of the interconnectedness of social systems, and that one does not function independently of others, the agency’s
survival is linked to the individual's well-being. This takes the concepts of mutuality and reciprocity between leaders and followers, in transformational leadership, to the next level. Respecting the social context of behavior, the group is the unit of focus, not the individual. Organizational and community survival, not individual worker output, is the focus of administrative concern (Daley, 1994; Schiele, 1990). Internal community building and connections with external communities are seen as paramount. A major tenet of Africentric theory is understanding the connection between individual and collective identities which influences the definition of problems and the nature of solutions (Schiele, 1994).

Traditional western boundaries are viewed as artificial. The view of human nature assumes that people are basically good and need a supportive community to overcome obstacles (Warfield-Coppock, 1995). Leadership style is caring and supportive with a tendency to understand shortcomings in an organizational context, putting problems in the perspective of the larger social environment (Warfield-Coppock, 1995). “Staff relationships are based on the concept of family, inclusiveness and the idea of interdependence and that every person has a role to play in maintaining the harmony of the group” (Warfield-Coppock, 1995:40).

There is a recognition of a range of learning and practice styles which support the legitimacy of the experiential aspect of learning. This is seen in agency hiring, supervising and in the evaluation process which focus on more qualitative outcomes. Such an orientation leads to a de-emphasis on productivity alone as an outcome evaluator. Along with deemphasizing the purely rational approach to understanding behavior and behavioral outcomes is the belief that behavior is non-rational (compatible with the symbolic domain introduced by Bolman and Deal in their contributions to transformational leadership).

Behavior may reflect a multitude of positive and negative experiences in human interactions and at times may be impulsive. This would also lead to a de-emphasis on the quantitative productivity focused aspects of bureaucratically oriented organizations (Daley, 1995; Schiele, 1990). In the organization, the highest value is placed on interpersonal relationships, or what feminists call connectedness (Schiele, 1990; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Schriver, & Surrey, 1991). Supportive relationships, based on group (small
community) interactions define every day work routines and impact significantly on job satisfaction (Daley, 1994; McNeely, 1992, Schiele, 1994) as discussed in transformational leadership. The awareness that individual, organizational and community problems are connected is a similar perspective shared with feminists. The desire to flatten hierarchy, downplay superordinate-subordinate relations, promote participatory management, and encourage an equitable distribution of power in a community context are emphasized in both feminism and Africentrism and fit well with transformational leadership. By focusing on Africentric and feminist perspectives, racism and sexism are highlighted, providing insights into the political frame of conflicts and struggles the agency’s leadership may experience.

Methodology

This research was conducted to supplement data from an earlier pilot study on women administrators working in both feminist and traditional human service settings (Arches and Schneider, 1994). This second phase of the research found its origin in the striking absence of information related to race.

Sample. The sample reflects the exploratory nature of the research design. Agencies were selected that would provide information about the struggles and leadership styles of female administrators in community based agencies serving multicultural and multiracial communities in one urban area. Each agency was selected based on its comparable size, length of time in existence, length of employment of the administrator, urban location and the ethnically diverse populations it served.

The agencies included: 1) three alcohol and drug abuse programs, 2) three battered women’s organizations, 3) three multi-service centers, 4) three agencies addressing immigrant and refugee issues, 4) four health oriented organizations, and 5) four mental health centers. All agencies were considered medium sized, employing from 11–40 full-time staff.

The president of the local chapter of the National Association of Social Workers generated a list of agencies serving communities of color, from which agencies meeting the above criteria were contacted and asked to be in the study.
Sixteen of the 20 respondents held masters degrees in social work or a related field, one held a doctorate, one had a BSW and two held associates degrees. Each agency had at least two masters level workers, with degrees in social work, counseling or human services, and other workers with some or no college background. All of the agencies had staff who represented diverse Latino, African, Asian and Euro-American racial and ethnic backgrounds.

*Data Collection and Analysis.* Open-ended, semi-structured interviews, conducted by the same two researchers together allowed for the respondents to express their own words, memories and thoughts. The women, who were interviewed in their own agencies, answered questions about the organization’s mission and history; their vision for the agency; the obstacles they face; approaches toward minimizing obstacles and maximizing gains; strategies for hiring, supervising and problem-solving with staff; and the role gender, race and ethnicity plays in their work.

Each interview lasted approximately ninety minutes. All the interviews were tape recorded and later listened to for common themes, based on concepts and phrases expressed by the interviewees. The tapes were reviewed at least twice by each of the two interviewers who listened to the tapes separately, listed themes after listening to the tapes, and came together to discuss the findings, and then repeated the process until agreement was reached.

**Findings**

Connecting with community emerged as a style of leadership and a source of strength as administrators described their examples of external community building. The following section reports, as much as possible in their own words, the ways in which connecting with communities was a strategy of leadership for these respondents.

(Pointing to a picture). This is my son, he was 18. This young man seated next to him is a paraplegic... he had been shot up, as he lay on his bed, by some drug lords who came to his family’s house one Sunday morning and shot up eight people. And shot him in the head and left him for dead. Shot his mother dead. And I say that I
came here to work because I am a woman of color and it is important to me what happens to young men of color. . . . And I really believed that coming here I could influence care and services in a way that our cities could be made better. If our cities are made better then I get to help my boys (administrator in a health care facility).

In response to their struggles and based on their values, all the women spoke of their attempts to connect with the larger geographic and functional communities of which they were members. The Africentric value of blending individual and community in one's identity was apparent. Seeing themselves as community members was in fact a significant aspect of who they were. It provided not only a sense of identity but a source of strength and positive self regard as well. In defining the nature of problems, and in their attempts to resolve them, reaching out to the community was the approach most frequently cited.

An agency which served pregnant women through community education, public health, and social services was determined to hire community women with medical skills, as opposed to men with medical experience, or professional women not connected to this particular immigrant and refugee community. First attempts at hiring yielded literally no applicants with these qualifications. Actually, only men who had experiences as medics in the military applied. The director was informed, by the men, that the women she hoped to hire simply did not exist in this population. She was informed that women, who did not serve in the military, did not have the opportunity to learn or practice medical techniques. Determined in her belief that women with these qualifications were indeed out there, she changed her strategy. She moved the interviewing process from the office to an apartment in the community. Information about the positions spread informally by word of mouth in the factories, beauty salons and shops where women worked. Flyers advertising the positions were left with local community groups and merchants. Two open houses were held at the apartment resulting in a wonderful range of qualified female applicants. They were community women who had been midwives and healers before immigrating to the U.S. The women who were hired were known and respected in the community. They had "community links, people who the community looked to when they needed help."
In addition, this agency connects to the community through a retreat day, to work on agency direction, which includes staff, the board, and other significant community people. Their mission is not just to promote the health of the women they serve, but of the entire community.

The origins of one of the battered women’s organizations which serves a diverse multicultural, multilingual population was firmly rooted in the community. A social worker providing services in a daycare center began a rap group for mothers who had appeared isolated and individually had complained of abuse.

As trust built, the women began talking about the physical abuse their families, friends and they were experiencing. She worked with the group to figure out how to address the issues in the community. They looked around and found there were no resources in the community—and, decided, as women often do, this wasn’t okay. They were going to do something on their own. They exchanged phone numbers (what later became a hot line), took each other in (the beginnings of a safe house network) and maintained the rap group (later to become a support group). They went to court with each other, and that’s how our advocacy program began.

The director of a mental health agency spent the first half hour of our interview enthusiastically discussing a conference she had just attended for third world women on the topic of WOMEN AND AIDS. This was clearly an important community connection she was eager to talk about. Her community of support were women of color, and the coalition she built with this group was personally energizing. It was a source of inspiration for this African American woman to be able to cross socially defined boundaries and to connect with her Latina, African and Caribbean sisters and to be able to share their experiences despite language differences.

This director frequently spoke of her dedicated staff and the fact that she frequently had to discourage them from working overtime. They were always at work! When asked to what she attributed the energy level and commitment of her staff, she responded, “If there’s one thing that keeps us going, it’s our commitment to the agency and the community.”

It was striking to observe the importance placed on connecting to their communities. They worked hard to develop and
maintain trust, decrease social distance and to be responsive to the needs of the community. Their understanding of the connection between their agencies, their clients and the communities reflected ideological sources of praxis grounded in feminism and Africentrism. While it was a source of support and strength, at times it was stressful and created additional tensions.

The commitment to community, and the frustration she felt when this seemed to be undermined, was expressed by the director of an outpatient community-based drug treatment program for women. She expressed strong concerns that the advisory board, which did not represent the community, did not understand community issues in their recommendations regarding a new program. Their insensitivity, she felt, was reflected in the hours the center was to be open (which did not take into consideration school and work schedules), the age range of child care (which neglected the needs of children slightly older than preschoolers but who were sure to be showing up), and especially the tools of evaluating the program (which were exclusively quantitatively outcome oriented).

These women don’t live in the community and they’re telling me, who lives in the community, what’s needed. That’s like a slap in the face. That’s a lot of power they have. . . . It kills me when they say, “You don’t know what you’re talking about,” and I’m from the community and they’re not. And they’re making assumptions about kids.

The range and extent of connecting to community varied with the context of the organization. In the more bureaucratically structured agencies, community building took the form of recognizing the needs of the community in setting goals (what hours the program should be open), planning (bringing in relatives to run programs), and dealing with obstacles (by actively staying connected with community groups as a source of support), ensuring the use of space to create and provide opportunities for social interaction, especially those related to eating together, and encouraging social interactions and shared experiences through activities that supported celebratory rituals and events. The agencies taking on more collective models had structures that not only allowed them to creatively utilize space to ensure opportunities
to eat, celebrate and interact but also enabled the leadership to respond to external geographic and functional community needs by structurally including the community, reaching out to the community through hiring and strategic planning, community driven programs, and designing a financial plan building on workers' experiences budgeting within the context of their families.

Conclusion

Theories of transformational leadership provide an additional framework for understanding the struggles and strategies that validate the leadership styles expressed by the respondents. Feminist and Africentrist perspectives provide the locus of understanding for the political frame connecting the organizational analysis to race and gender. These perspectives supplement the transformational theories, adding insights into administrative strategies based on community building and connecting to communities. With the current attack on low income women and immigrant communities, these strategies deserve understanding and support. The respondents in this study clearly voiced an acknowledgment and respect for their communities, sorely missing from much of the policy and practice debates that are presently part of public discourse.

References


Conservatives generally believe that government largess has created a morally defective welfare subculture. Some argue that excessive welfare payments contribute to high homicide rates by undermining individual responsibility and attachment to traditional social institutions. Liberals, on the other hand, suggest that higher welfare benefits may reduce homicide rates by alleviating the strains of poverty and promoting educational achievement. Drawing on a review of literature and aggregate welfare data, this study examined the relationship between local AFDC benefit levels and homicide rates. Variables were derived from Department of Health and Human Services, 1990 Census, and FBI data describing social/economic areas (N=394). Controlling for several economic and demographic variables, higher AFDC payments were associated with lower homicide rates. In addition, AFDC benefit level had an indirect negative effect on the homicide rate via its negative association with the high school dropout rate. Overall, these findings support the welfare-as-an-investment-in-youth and integrated strain-disorganization perspectives.

Introduction

In response to the murder of a woman in November of 1995, House Speaker Newt Gingrich declared, "Let's talk about what the welfare state has created, let's talk about the moral decay of the world the left is defending" (New York Times, 1995, p. 34A). Several prominent conservative scholars have joined Gingrich in arguing that high welfare guarantees lead to more social problems. These authors have suggested that welfare encourages denial of responsibility among the poor and reduces attachment to traditional social institutions (Wilson, 1995; Murray, 1984). Most notably, Gilder (1981) has claimed that high welfare payments
encourage the poor to withdraw from school and the legitimate labor market by rewarding failure. Similarly, Rector (1992) has argued that generous welfare payments increase 'behavioral poverty', a term that includes both low levels of academic achievement and high levels of violent crime.

Liberal authors, on the other hand, have argued that higher levels of support to poor families should reduce violent crime by alleviating the personal strains of poverty and poverty induced community disorganization (Davey, 1995; Sampson and Wilson, 1995; Cullen, 1994). Liberal policy advocates have recently emphasized a model that views welfare as an investment in youth and education (Duncan, 1994; Butler, 1990). A long line of research has shown that higher income is negatively associated with school failure (Sherman, 1994). There has also been a substantial amount of research demonstrating that school failure, especially dropping out of high school, is strongly related to criminality (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990) and embeddedness in criminal networks (Hagan and Peterson, 1995). Moreover, low income areas tend to have high rates of both high school dropout and homicide. Thus liberals generally suggest that welfare payment has a direct negative effect on the homicide rate because it alleviates economic tensions and an indirect negative effect because it also helps reduce the dropout rate.

Previous Studies

Despite a considerable amount of research on the relationship between poverty and homicide, only a few criminologists have attempted to examine the potential moderating effects of economic assistance to the poor. Using a sample of 1970 SMSAs (n=39), DeFronzo (1983) reported that the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment per person (Aid for Families with Dependent Children) had a significant negative effect on the homicide rate. Concerned with DeFronzo's small sample size, Messner (1986) replicated DeFronzo's analysis using a much larger sample of 1980 SMSAs (n=292) and an unadjusted measure. Messner reaffirmed DeFronzo's conclusion that higher AFDC payments were associated with lower urban homicide rates.

Taking a somewhat different approach, Rosenfeld (1986) examined the effects of state AFDC eligibility requirements on 1980
SMSA homicide rates. Consistent with DeFronzo and Messner, he found that benefit restrictiveness had a significant positive effect on the homicide rate. However, he also reported a significant positive effect of the proportion of poor families receiving public assistance. This finding offered some support for the conservative argument that increased welfare participation translates into higher levels of social disorganization. Rosenfeld cautioned against unconditional interpretations of these findings noting that alternative specifications were needed to clarify his results (p. 122). Indeed, there were several potentially important omissions from his model. While he noted that his measure of welfare participation was a measure of "dependency and not simply a redundant measure of poverty" (p. 121), Rosenfeld did not include a measure of poverty with which this variable would be redundant. Moreover, Rosenfeld did not control for the percent of female headed families in an area. This variable is often interpreted solely as a measure of community social control, but it could also be seen as reflecting a particular type (or outcome) of poverty (Wilson, 1987; Sampson and Wilson, 1995). Compared to their married family counterparts, female headed families are much more likely to have extremely low incomes and to live in the poorest of areas (Sidel, 1996). The percent of female headed families generally has a strong positive effect on urban homicide rates and is significantly correlated with welfare participation rates (Sampson, 1987).

In a study of large cities in 1980, Sampson (1987) found that both the percent of black families receiving public assistance and the mean public assistance payment per black family had significant negative effects on the black homicide rate. These effects were independent of the percent of black families in poverty and percent of black families that were female headed. The discrepancy between the Rosenfeld and Sampson findings may be due to the lack of statistical control for poverty and family structure in Rosenfeld's analysis.

Using national crime rate data for 1948-1985, Devine, Sheley and Smith (1988) reported a negative but statistically insignificant relationship between total welfare spending and the homicide rate. Like Rosenfeld, these authors did not include family structure in their analysis. In a longitudinal and cross-national study that controlled for changes in family dissolution, Gartner (1990)
found significant negative effects of total welfare spending on age specific homicide rates. These effects were particularly pronounced for child homicide. In a somewhat more comprehensive study, Briggs and Cutright (1994) also reported significant negative effects of total public assistance expenditures on child homicide rates.

Zimmerman's (1995, 1987) studies of a related form of lethal violence, suicide, showed that higher state social welfare expenditures were associated with substantially lower suicide rates. Controlling for several economic and demographic variables, she found that welfare expenditures explained the variation in state suicide rates between 1985 and 1990 better than any other measure (1995).

This study adds to previous research on welfare and violence in several ways. First, I use local labor markets as my units of analysis. These are social and economic areas that cover the entire 50 states and the District of Columbia. Thus unlike previous research, I include non-metropolitan areas in my analysis. This is an important addition considering that recent criminological research at the county level has demonstrated that homicide in rural areas is much more common than generally believed. Kposowa and Breault (1993, p. 40) have noted that of the top 30 homicide rates in 1980, 23 were in counties with populations below 20,000. Second, this study examines the links between welfare assistance, dropping out of school, and homicide rates. Previous studies that included the dropout rate have generally used it in an index of poverty where the unique effects of the dropout rate were masked. Given the consistently high percentage of violent felons who have dropped out of high school and the contemporary importance of the education versus prisons debate (Davey, 1995), dropout rates deserve singular attention. Moreover, considering the current significance of the welfare-as-an-investment-in-youth model (Sherman, 1994), this study will test for an indirect effect of AFDC payment on the homicide rate via AFDC's effect on the dropout rate.

Data, Variables and Method
This analysis used Tolbert and Killian's (1997) delineation of 394 labor market areas (LMA's) for the United States. LMAs are
AFDC and Homicide

quite simply the areas in which most people both live and work. Similar to MSAs, LMAs were designed to be social/economic areas and are well suited for studying the relationship between economic factors and crime. Unlike MSAs however, these definitions were not based on an urban center but instead rely solely on commuter flows. Based on 1990 census journey-to-work data, these areas were constructed with elaborate matrices of commuting ties among groups of U.S. counties and county-equivalents. LMAs do not begin with a central place assumption and are not constrained by state boundaries. Thus LMAs are social rather than political units. The fact that LMAs contain component data from different states helps reduce the amount of spatial autocorrelation in the equations. This is especially important given that most of the variation in AFDC payments is among states rather than among counties. Compared to research utilizing SMSAs, which generally do not cross state lines, LMA definitions increase the total amount of variation in local AFDC payments and lessen the bias toward states containing more metropolitan areas.

Nineteen-ninety census data from USA-Counties-1996 were aggregated to produce most of the LMA variables used in this analysis (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996). The homicide rate was derived from the Uniform Crime Reports 1989–1990 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1990, 1991). State AFDC benefit levels were obtained from the Department of Health and Human Services (1992). The mode of aggregation of county data varied depending on the specific measure: counts were summed, while means and percentages were disaggregated, summed, and reaggregated.

The dependent variable for this analysis was the number of homicides per 100,000 persons in the average population between 1989 and 1990. Because homicide rates may be somewhat unstable, the homicide data were averaged over two years—1989 and 1990. The intervening variable was the percent of 16–19 year olds who were not enrolled in school and had not completed high school in 1990. This measure is commonly referred to as a ‘status dropout rate’ (U.S. Department of Education, 1990).

A key component variable for this study was the average monthly AFDC payment per recipient in 1990. I chose this
measure over the average welfare payment per family (used by Sampson) to minimize the confounding effects of local differences in average family size. AFDC is the largest and most heavily debated form of government income assistance to the poor. Payment levels are set by individual states and vary substantially. Mississippi had the lowest 1990 monthly payment per person ($40), while Alaska had the highest ($245).

Since areas vary in cost of living, an adjustment seemed appropriate to specify the relative worth of each AFDC payment. I created an adjusted AFDC payment measure using the local median gross rent in 1990 as a proxy for cost of living. The adjusted AFDC variable was derived by dividing the average local AFDC payment per person by a cost of living ratio (local median gross rent / national median gross rent). Gross monthly rent consists of the contract rent plus the estimated costs of utilities when not already included in the contract rent. Housing costs (especially rent costs) are particularly relevant for low income groups. These expenses generally consume a much larger portion of poor people's revenue than that of their middle income counterparts (Wright, 1989). The overwhelming majority of poor households (70–75%) are without any housing subsidy (1989). While the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recommends that a household should spend no more than 25% of its income on housing, about one quarter of all poor households typically report spending over 70% of their income on rent (1989). Consistent with DeFronzo's (1983) study, the adjusted and unadjusted AFDC measures were highly correlated (r=.80) and the adjusted variable had a somewhat stronger association with the homicide rate.

Other variables were: the percent of families that were female headed, the unemployment rate, the percent of persons in poverty (in 1989), the percent of the population between the ages of 16 and 29, population size and the percent of the population designated as urban by the U.S. Census Bureau. An exploration of various possible non-linear relationships resulted in the logarithmic transformation of population size to better suit the assumptions of regression. I then created an index of urbanism by combining the natural log of the total LMA population in 1990 and the percent of the population designated as urban (following Cao and Maume, 1993).
I used Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to estimate the equations. None of the bivariate correlations between the independent variables were above .65 and none of the variance inflation factors (VIFs) were above 4.0. Thus, the equations did not appear to suffer from excessive multicollinearity (Fox, 1991).

Results

An analysis of the bivariate correlations of the variables included in Models 1 and 2 (Table 1) revealed that the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment, dropout rate and percent of female headed families were all strongly associated with the homicide rate (r = -.53, r = .54, r = .61 respectively). Additionally, the unemployment rate, degree of urbanism and percent of the population in poverty had moderately strong correlations with the homicide rate (r = .28, r = .29 and r = .40 respectively). In the first multivariate equation (Model 1), the net effects of the percent of female headed families (BETA = .37, p < .001), the percent of the population in poverty (BETA = .25, p < .001) and degree of urbanism (BETA = .20, p < .001) were all substantial. Consistent with DeFronzo’s (1983) and Messner’s (1986) findings, the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment per person had a significant negative net effect on the homicide rate (BETA = -.31, p < .001).

Table 1

Effects on 1990 LMA Homicide Rates (N=394) (Standardized Regression Coefficients Reported)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Covariates</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Families Female Headed</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Persons in Poverty</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanism Index</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of the Population 16–29</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted AFDC Payment</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% among Ages 16–19 HS Dropouts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(two tailed)</td>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < .05  
** P < .001
Model 2 shows the same equation with the addition of the dropout rate. The adjusted $R^2$ increased from .52 to .57. The dropout rate had a relatively large positive net effect on the homicide rate ($\text{BETA}=.28, p<.001$). The net effect of the unemployment rate remained statistically insignificant. The previous slight effect of the percentage of the population between the ages of 16 and 29 was rendered insignificant. The net effects for the percent of female headed families, degree of urbanism, and percent of the population in poverty remained essentially the same, while the net effect of the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment was greatly reduced by the inclusion of the dropout variable ($\text{BETA}_1=-.31, \text{BETA}_2=-.17$). About forty-five percent of AFDC payment's effect on the homicide rate was due to its negative association with the dropout rate. The bivariate correlation between the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment and the dropout rate was negative and substantial ($r=-.48$).

Table 2 compares the means of LMA homicide rates for three intervals of the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment. The average homicide rate for all LMAs was 6.4. AFDC intervals were selected to divide the sample in approximate thirds. The observed means are accompanied by means adjusted for the effects of the covariates: percent of female headed families, percent of the population in poverty, unemployment rate, urbanism index, and percent of the population between the ages of 16 and 29.

### Table 2
**Analysis of Variance of 1990 LMA Homicide Rates By AFDC Intervals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of Living Adjusted Average AFDC Monthly Payment Per Person</th>
<th>Observed Means</th>
<th>Means Adjusted for Covariates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homicide Rate**</td>
<td>Homicide Rate**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $102</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$102 to $138</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $138</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** $p < .001$
The dropout rate was excluded from the equation so that the indirect as well as direct association between AFDC and the homicide rate would be reflected in the differences among the adjusted means. The mean homicide rate adjusted for the effects of the control variables was 42% lower for areas in the top third of AFDC payments (4.7) than for areas in the bottom third (8.1).

An alternative specification that replaced the percent of all families that were female headed with the percent of all families that were both poor and female headed revealed nearly identical results. The bivariate correlation between these variables was .84. Similar results were also obtained when the percent black was substituted for the percent of female headed families. The bivariate correlation was .76.

In other supplemental analyses, I created a dummy variable for southern location. Southern location was negatively associated with the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment (r = -.51) and positively associated with the dropout rate (r = .47). As in Messner's (1986) study of SMSAs, despite relatively high collinearity, the net effect of AFDC payment on the homicide rate remained significant. More important, when the southern LMAs were removed from the sample, AFDC payment's effects on the homicide and dropout rates were nearly identical to those identified in the full analysis. However, these results must be interpreted with caution given the limited variance in the regional subsample.

I also tested for a potential indirect effect of the average welfare payment on the homicide rate via welfare payment's relationship to the prevalence of female headed families. As in previous studies (Blank, 1995; Moffitt, 1992), I found no support for the hypothesis that higher AFDC payments were strongly associated with more female headed families. In fact, controlling for the other variables in the homicide equation, the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment was negatively associated with the percent of all families that were female headed.

Finally, a supplemental analysis using 1980 data revealed very similar results. Controlling for other factors, the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment had a direct negative effect on 1980 LMA homicide rates (N=382) and a substantial indirect negative effect through the status dropout rate.
Conclusion

Conservatives implicate excessively generous government policies as partly responsible for high homicide rates. The findings of this analysis suggest that conservative proposals to limit AFDC benefits should not be legitimated as a means to reduce extreme violence. Instead, the results support the welfare-as-an-investment-in-youth and integrated strain-disorganization perspectives. Higher welfare payments were associated with lower dropout and homicide rates. The significant negative effect of the cost of living adjusted AFDC payment per person on the homicide rate is consistent with research using SMSAs. As Currie points out, it is probably not coincidental that among developed countries "the United States is afflicted simultaneously with the worst rates of violent crime, the widest spread in income inequality, and the most severe public policies toward the disadvantaged" (1985, p. 171). The nation's current priorities are reducing violent crime and cutting back on welfare expenditures. Unfortunately, it seems the costs of poverty must be paid in one form or another.

Note

1. The data and tabulations utilized in this paper were made available (in part) by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. The data for the Uniform Crime Reports were originally collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice. Neither the collector of the original data nor the Consortium bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented within.

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AFDC and Homicide


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AFDC and Homicide

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In comparison to the active second wave of feminism during the 1970s, the backlash of the 1980s slowed feminist advancements. In the 1990s, feminism rebounded and made important progress. Currently, feminist thought is acknowledged and explored in many academic fields and women's studies departments have become commonplace in universities and colleges across the country. The various perspectives represented in feminism continue to require the clarification that there are many feminisms. Although diversity allows many voices to be represented, it also confounds issues requiring consensus. In some ways, feminism's diversity in emphasis and strategy has slowed attainment of its basic goal of action and social change. Exactly how to best accomplish transforming the structure of society to more ably meet and acknowledge the needs of women has been an ongoing debate among feminists.

Gottfried's book is directed at addressing the problems that feminist researchers face in the effort to do research about, for, and with women. She explains that feminism is viewed as an epistemology, a theory, and a methodology. The overall theme of the book is how to best link feminist theory with actual practice that will then lead to social change. The chapters of the edited volume are divided into three main sections; (1) Doing Feminist Research: Dilemmas and Contradictions, which presents specific issues in feminist debates concerning theory, research, and practice, (2) The Outsider Within, which focuses on issues concerning various women's communities presented through case studies, and (3) Participatory and Liberatory Advocacy, which discusses strategies of activist research. Within these three sections contributing authors discuss their own research, perspective on feminist theory, and opinion on the ability of social science research practices to promote social change.
Gottfried begins by supplying the reader with a description of important and recent work on the subject of feminist research. She argues that this book differs from others on the subject because it is concrete in content and presents diverse research methodologies including ethnographic study, in-depth interviewing, participatory and advocacy research practices, and coalition building. Presenting the use of various methodologies helps illuminate both the problems and possibilities that feminist research offers for creating social change. Although the entire book is targeted to discussing the difficulties of feminist research, Part One specifically addresses the ongoing debate between positivism and feminism. Included in this debate is discussion of the ways in which quantitative and qualitative methods are applicable for advancing the concerns of women. The feminist agenda is clearly one of political action and chapters in this section evaluate past progress and future consequences of feminist scholarship.

Next, the chapters in Part Two present the actual research projects of feminists engaged in work that attempts to overcome the subject-object barrier. Projects involving participant observation and in-depth interviews with undocumented immigrant Latina and Caribbean women employed as domestics demonstrates feminist researchers attempts to capture the experiences of these women directly. Another chapter uses case studies to present the issues surrounding research from a lesbian feminist perspective. The second section concludes with a chapter directly engaging the feminist perspective that the personal is political. From the standpoint of survivors of childhood sexual assault, the authors of this chapter use personal narrative linked with feminist theory to challenge oppressors, illustrating how theory and research can be effectively tied to action.

Part Three continues with a presentation of methodologies used by feminist researchers to advance social change and discusses the constraints that require some researchers to adopt conventional methods. One chapter offers a historical look at the ways in which two generations of feminists were trained, the first originating from the Hull-House and University of Chicago, and the second arising in the 1960s and 1970s during the second wave of feminism. This serves to frame the contrast and comparison between participatory research, which engages community's
involvement, and advocacy research that relies on data sets to help formulate policy. Another author argues that feminist coalition building is necessary and useful for feminist politics but requires recognizing differences and commonalities among those who favor social change.

Gottfried does a good job of presenting the core issues that not only represent feminist thought but also complicate its advancement. The critiques offered by various authors concerning the constraints imposed on feminist research, especially in the academic setting, are insightful and illustrate the current situation of feminist research. The title of the book appropriately reflects the fact that each of the pieces in the collection contribute in their own way to bridging feminist theory and social action. By having various authors contribute to the book, Gottfried is able to present a volume that addresses the multiple perspectives and approaches of feminist thought and practice. This endeavor effectively broadens the appeal of the book and is clearly a contribution to feminist scholarship. Gottfried’s book allows the reader the opportunity to see the diversity in feminist thought and the offering of choice in applicable research methods.

Rebecca S. Carter
Louisiana State University


Much of the recent attention to violence has come from the feminist literature, with the main focus being the abuse experienced by women and children. The United Nations’ conference on women in Nairobi and China helped bring this problem to the international forefront.

Keane disputes the claim that organizing societies into nation states was a civilizing process of establishing a “democratic zone of peace”. It was believed that nation states would end the barbaric violence of primitive societies. Given the past century’s quantity and brutality of violence, the author laments the paucity of reflection in political theory on its causes, effects, and implications.
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Keane is critical of Adam Ferguson’s and Ernest Gellner’s optimistic attempts to resurrect the notion of civil society as a counter balance to the state. For Gellner, industrial nations are headed toward civil society (e.g., Europe’s recent velvet revolutions). This is a victory of civil societies over despotic state regimes. For Keane, such theories distract from chronic violence within civil societies and ignore the “new politics of civility” that seek to end violence against women and children and attempt to expose the barbarism of capital punishment, genocide, and nuclear war. Indeed, modern nation states are dangerous instruments of pacification because this pacification does not extend to the relationship among states in spite of international negotiations and diplomacy.

Keane views the world of nations emerging along the Philadelphian model which makes the states more accountable for their use of violence. The principles of this model are equality of the member states of the union, citizens’ rights such as free press and speech, and division of power among states on matters such as policing and war making.

World bodies such as the UN, war crimes tribunals, and human rights organizations are some of the elements of the Philadelphian model that have put some limits on the extent of violence such as denouncing rape as a weapon of war, and particularly direct action by civilians with regard to nuclear war.

The spread of nuclear weapons and their governmental justification that they are a “deterrence” has been resisted by these movements. Justification of an arms race and the ideology of state power was fed by fear and anxiety spread by civil defense drills and the mass media on how to survive a nuclear attack. However, it was the non-governmental groups that resisted and exposed the manipulation of the people and see themselves “as passive hostages in the wider struggle among nuclear states”; thus resisting state dominance.

Keane rejects Johan Galtung’s definition of violence which includes “anything avoidable that impedes human self realization” and linking it to the “satisfaction of human needs.” The original Latin term violentia means exercise of physical force against someone and Keane embraces that as more accurate and “better understood as . . . physical interference [which causes] a series of effects ranging from [injuries] . . . or even death.”
Keane describes two microlevel explanations based on the conception of human nature; the first of which supposes that humans are essentially wicked. (This fails to explain why and how individuals and societies have remained pacifists, sometimes, for extended period.) The second, that human nature is perverted but can be changed.

One of the two institutional-level explanations is the macrolevel geopolitical theories that trace the violence to the permanently de-centered international system of states. Keane prefers mesolevel regime theories, that claim that violence results from historically specific political or socioeconomic systems. For example, violence stems from monarchy (Paine) or despotism (Montesquieu) or capitalism (Marx) or states structured by pre-capitalist values (Schumpeter) or totalitarian dictatorships (Arendt).

Although he attempts to make a distinction between the civil society-centered and capitalism-centered explanations, he integrates both. Civil societies develop measures such as welfare, sports and entertainment; all designed to counter social tensions. But these measures are inadequate because of the expansionary nature of capitalism and exporting of violence to all regions of the world. Stress, anxiety, chronic uncertainty, racism, unemployment, easy availability of cheap means of violence, violence as entertainment, thrill and pleasure are consequences of such expansion.

Contemporary nationalism in Eastern Europe in response to the reckless and creative destruction of the global capitalist economy has been another source of violence. The mindboggling ferocity and the extent of uncivil wars (inner city riots, skinheads, Gestapo, Klansmen, Rwanda, Serbia) makes simplistic explanations appealing. Pessimistic ontological explanations (believing that people are basically evil) serves as an apology for continued violence and the belief that people are basically good is a utopian pacifist fantasy. Private solutions (gated communities, employing security staff, burglar alarms, gun ownership) are also contradictory because they bring violence or threat of violence into the heart of social life.

Dealing with violence is such a complex issue that goal of reducing and eliminating violence effectively will require multiple approaches ranging from macrolevel strategies such as arms
reduction, banning the production and sale of landmines, war crimes tribunals, regional integration of states, to microlevel laws against bodily harassment against women, children, gays and lesbians and ethnic groups. Keane warns that these tactics are likely to drift into authoritarian law and order strategies “unless cultures of civility are cultivated at the level of civil society.” One of the challenges of promoting civility is the characteristic of public life in capitalist economies. It is completely distorted and commodified. Keane puts it eloquently:

commodity-structured economies encourage moral selfishness and disregard of the public good; maximize the time citizens are compulsorily bound to paid labour, thereby making it difficult for them to be involved as citizens in public life; and promote ignorance and deception through profit-driven media manipulation. (p. 167)

Keane does not call for the end of capitalism. Yet under global capitalism, it is accumulation of wealth that is the driving force behind wars. Marx’s remark, “socialism or barbarism” comes to mind. Both the urban poor of industrial nations and the third world poor live in barbarism caused by poverty and social injustice. They fear the slum lords or the landlords; live in streets; sell drugs; prostitute themselves; and respond to hunger and destitution by stealing and begging.

Keane also overlooks the insight provided by the feminist theory into the causes of violence at the microlevel but has macro implications, namely, the role of patriarchy and hierarchy. These suggest the need to not only curtail capitalism (one form of hierarchy based on class) but also to end patriarchy—hierarchy that predates capitalism and is much more firmly entrenched in society than capitalism. In these theories, personal is political and struggle against violence begins with personal transformation that leads to social and political transformation to a nonhierarchical society. Finally, Keane’s preference for the older definition of violence is inconsistent with his endorsement of capitalism-centered regime theories. These theories imply oppression, exploitation and the anomic indifference and alienation experienced under expanding capitalism in modern times. This is where we can trace the root causes of most of the existing uncivil wars that he refers to. In spite of these oversights, Keane’s reflections break the
long silence on violence in political theory and succeed in making us all ashamed of the long century of violence while working toward sensible ways to reduce it.

Henry J. D'Souza, Ph.D.
University of Nebraska at Omaha


Readers familiar with a similarly titled book by Moses Rischin (*The Promised City: New York's Jews 1870–1914*) might anticipate that this one offers a broad portrait of the cultures, social adaptations, political struggles, and economic experiences of New York's African-Americans and recent immigrants. If that’s what you want, then this is not the book for you; instead it is devoted to one issue—the distribution of jobs among New York City's diverse workers. Waldinger carefully examines stability and change in the racial-ethnic division of labor, answering questions like “which racial-ethnic groups get the ‘good’ jobs and which get the ‘lousy’ jobs?”, “why does it work out that way despite official efforts to ‘open up’ the job market?”, and “why have immigrants entered certain industries in great numbers instead of (or as replacements for) African-American workers?”. Waldinger blitzes the reader with charts, graphs, and index numbers based on Census data from before WW II to 1990, showing the economic “ethnic niches” of New York City's native-born African-Americans, three large immigrant groups (the Chinese, Dominicans, and West Indians), and two older white ethnic groups (Jews and Italians). He also provides fascinating case studies, based on interviews with employers, union leaders, and labor department officials in industries that have served as economic niches for one or more NYC racial-ethnic groups: garment manufacturing, construction work, hotels and restaurants, working “for the City” (e.g., police, fire, welfare departments and other civil service jobs), and the world of small businesses run by ethnic entrepreneurs.

Waldinger finds that each racial-ethnic group's position in the job hierarchy is a complex function of demographics, political clout, industry structure, forms of racism, skill level (“what
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Waldinger finds that each racial-ethnic group's position in the job hierarchy is a complex function of demographics, political clout, industry structure, forms of racism, skill level ("what
you know"), and social capital ("who you know"). He shows that ethnic niches in New York's economy are not temporary phenomena—groups succeed each other in them, and upon moving out of one, group members usually concentrate in a few other niches instead of spreading out evenly among all industrial sectors. Waldinger's research testifies to the many ways and reasons employers and employees find it in their own interests to use friend/kin networks (predominantly of one racial-ethnic group) to recruit new workers in an industry, thereby privileging one group and excluding "ethnic outsiders." His most important conclusion, for readers interested in inter-group relations and racial stratification, is that new job opportunities and the prospect of upward socioeconomic mobility in the 1980s for New York's African-Americans and new immigrants, depended, more than anything else, on whites' selective abandonment of certain industries, which made room for new groups to enter and turn those jobs into their own ethnic niches.

Waldinger also deals with the question of job competition between African-Americans and new immigrants, and given the book's focus and data I expected a stronger treatment of this important issue. His discussion of it is too brief and scattered to drive home his conclusion—that immigrants are ensconced in some jobs that were once black economic niches, but the immigrants neither directly nor indirectly displaced them from those jobs.

Waldinger repeatedly tries to make the reader believe that his findings disconfirm the two most widely held explanations of present-day urban economic inequality—"jobs/skills mismatch" and post-industrial "polarization." He makes two arguments against the mismatch thesis (which claims high black unemployment and poverty are due to the loss of urban manufacturing jobs): (a) due to discrimination and declining interest in manufacturing jobs since the 1960s African-Americans had minimal presence in any NYC manufacturing activity, so a decline in manufacturing would not hurt them; and (b) although New York City lost many manufacturing jobs during the 1970s and 1980s, plenty of manufacturing jobs were still available due to the large number of vacancies created by retiring whites, but these were more attractive to immigrants than to New York's native-born blacks who at that time were making government jobs in
the public sector their first choice for employment. Waldinger's disagreement with the polarization thesis (that a post-industrial service and information based economy creates too many jobs at the high and low-paying extremes and not enough in the middle) is thinner—he simply asserts that contrary to the popular "hourglass economy" metaphor, low-skill low-pay jobs really are not proliferating in New York City or in the country as a whole.

Social workers and applied sociologists may find this book interesting, but short on clinical or policy utility, especially since Waldinger emphasizes how social or governmental interventions intended to change patterns of racial-ethnic job recruitment have been negated by incumbent job-holders' informal connections in their ethnic niches. On the one hand, he shows how the construction industry minimized the entry of African-Americans despite social protest, political pressure, court-orders, and affirmative action plans; on the other hand, he explains how Mayor Koch's overturning of existing affirmative action plans from prior administrations did little to stem large-scale African-American entry into New York City's public sector workforce.

The author wrote this book with candor, objectivity, and a desire not to over-simplify complex and controversial issues. Perhaps for that reason evidence presented in some places seems to contradict arguments made elsewhere in the book. It is an important contribution to ongoing debates, but I think researchers on all sides of the issues addressed in this work will find much to argue with as well as much to praise and endorse.

Charles Jaret
Georgia State University


In Rethinking Abortion: Equal Choice, the Constitution and Reproductive Politics, Professor Mark Graber presents an interesting argument, one not immediately apparent from the title of this work, why abortion should remain legal. Promising to avoid a rehashing of the ongoing privacy debate, the author places the issue of equal access to abortion in the forefront and then frames
the public sector their first choice for employment. Waldinger's disagreement with the polarization thesis (that a post-industrial service and information based economy creates too many jobs at the high and low-paying extremes and not enough in the middle) is thinner—he simply asserts that contrary to the popular "hourglass economy" metaphor, low-skill low-pay jobs really are not proliferating in New York City or in the country as a whole.

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Charles Jaret
Georgia State University


In Rethinking Abortion: Equal Choice, the Constitution and Reproductive Politics, Professor Mark Graber presents an interesting argument, one not immediately apparent from the title of this work, why abortion should remain legal. Promising to avoid a rehashing of the ongoing privacy debate, the author places the issue of equal access to abortion in the forefront and then frames
his thesis with a historical review and social analysis of women’s access to abortionists. Abortion-justice-for-all is the central theme of this book, with the author calling for a permanent end to the “gray market” in safe abortions in this 160-page argument for equal choice, equal access, and equal justice.

Professor Graber wastes no time setting out his agenda. In the introductory section, supported by data revealing the correlation between socioeconomic class and access to safe abortion, the author asserts that equal choice is the new constitutional argument for maintaining the legality of abortion. Equal choice is an equality right, contends the author, and as such it must be available to all women. If abortion is once again made illegal, as many fear will happen, the unavailability of safe abortions to the poor and women of color will constitute discrimination in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantee of equal protection under the law. Having set forth these claims early on, the author devotes the remainder of this book to shoring up the foundation of his equal access thesis.

In chapter one the author works to distinguish his thesis from others previously asserted in the ongoing abortion debate. He particularly takes on feminist legal scholars like Catharine MacKinnon and suggests that existing pro-choice, feminist, and pro-life arguments are based on abstract concepts and thus are insufficient to ensure the equal application of law. Chapter two provides the historical context for Graber’s philosophical argument. Here, the author reviews the various anti-abortion laws and the characteristically restrictive enforcement of them that distinguishes pre Roe v. Wade access from post Roe access to abortion services during the twentieth century. If Roe is ultimately overturned, suggests Graber, a number of states will pass legislation or constitutional amendments authorizing legal abortions, but these state actions would once again result in unequal, and therefore discriminatory, access. Chapters three and four focus on the making of constitutionally-based laws, such as was seen in Roe, and on the enforcement of these laws, respectively. In the final chapter, the author pulls together various historical, philosophical, and moral considerations of equal justice and then subsequently recommends a politically strategic approach for safeguarding equal access to legal abortions.
With his emphasis on social injustice, Professor Graber's argument for equal access to abortion services is interesting from a social science perspective. Though unquestionably legalistic, the author manages to stay a step beyond the pure legal interpretation approach to abortion analysis by weaving together the threads of abortion policy, practice, and social impact. He delivers on his promise to avoid delving into the ongoing debate over constitutional guarantees of privacy. His argument is nicely framed by both the social and historical contexts in which it is situated. Interestingly, at times Professor Graber seems driven by his own existential guilt: at both the beginning and at the end of this text he somewhat apologetically tells of his family's privileged socioeconomic status and their predictably unrestrained access to abortion services, whether legal or not.

Unfortunately, the clarity of Graber's argument is sometimes obscured by a smug presentation and the use of simplistic analogies. He admonishes pro-choice advocates for not having incorporated social class and abortion access data into their legal arguments. In turn, Graber criticizes pro-life advocates for thinking that legal bans on abortion actually protect the unborn, saying "this facile assumption is based on a faulty syllogism" (p. 22). By summarily dismissing advocates from both sides of the debate, Graber misses the point about what is good in this ongoing, sometimes volatile dialogue: that when dealing with the issue of human life, whether real or potential, the philosophical and moral tensions surrounding the issue serve as normative balancing mechanisms during the process of its resolution. Unknowingly perhaps, Graber describes some of these tensions on page 21, but then calls them "historical and political nonsense." Sixteen pages later he actually defines the tensions when remarking that "[n]either the standard defenses nor the conventional critiques of Roe can persuade a clear majority of . . . Americans that a particular abortion policy best reflects our society's philosophical and constitutional values" (p. 37).

Additionally, though this book is clearly written for persons having experience reading and understanding difficult legal and social science concepts, Professor Graber uses simplistic analogies to further illustrate his points. For example, the author compares the impact of discriminatory enforcement of abortion bans with
the impact of discriminatory enforcement of laws banning littering and parking in red zones. These are, of course, dissimilar in that the former implicates a constitutional issue where the latter issues do not. More importantly, they are incomparable because one ban may be as important as the other depending on the relative position of the person it impacts. Finally, perhaps the most offensive example of the author's simplistic approach to securing equal access comes late in the text when Graber suggests that "repeating the arguments of chapters III and IV at appropriate moments may be the only political strategy necessary for keeping abortion legal (p. 118)."

Graber's theoretical approach is even-handed in that the equal access argument transcends the sticking points of pro-life and pro-choice rhetoric, i.e. when does life begin; does the fetus have constitutional rights; is the fetus entitled to constitutional protections? In theory, the equal access concept works whether abortion is legal or not. Historically, however, discriminatory treatment and disparate impact have occurred even where equal access has been "legally" assured; for example, in education, employment, and housing. The author deserves credit for presenting some important ideas in this book and students of social policy may find Professor Graber's approach of interest in terms of a broad examination of the concept of equal access and how it is played out for the poor and for women of color. In the end, however, his message is deceptively and misleadingly simple: policymakers, judges, lawyers, enforcers of the law, and their families and friends must not have nor exercise a privileged access to abortion. If only resolution of this great struggle could be that easy.

Margaret Severson
University of Kansas


Already well known for his work that described the differences between the brain structures of homosexual and heterosexual men, Simon LeVay (a neuroanatomist) tackles the persistent
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Already well known for his work that described the differences between the brain structures of homosexual and heterosexual men, Simon LeVay (a neuroanatomist) tackles the persistent
questions related to what makes certain women lesbian and certain men gay. A renowned scientist in the field, LeVay's extremely well written, fourteen chapter book is roughly divided into three sections. The first gives the reader a historical overview, the second explores various approaches that have been used in the study of sexual orientation, and the third centers on societal issues related to research on homosexuality.

The introduction and first chapter provide a historical context and foundation from which the remainder of the text evenly develops. Starting with the German gay rights movement that occurred at the start of this century, LeVay immediately engages the reader with an exceptionally good historical overview of sexual research and advocacy. Moving from Hirshfeld's views of the "third sex," LeVay examines various scientific approaches that have been used in the study of homosexuality. While the author acknowledges that while the early theoreticians (Hirshfeld, Brand, Freud) are dead, their "intellectual heirs are still with us and still going at it hammer and tongs" (p. 41). But, to temper some of the early antihomosexual theory, recent scientific discoveries have helped to view sexual orientation somewhat differently than did those early pioneers.

LeVay analyzes the prevalence of homosexuality and concludes that categorizing individuals as homosexuals or heterosexuals while convenient, is also inadequate because of the amount of diversity associated with sexual orientation. The focus shifts to a riveting account of psychoanalysis and curing homosexuality. Socarides and Bieber, common names associated with reparative therapy, have their scientific work analyzed, and data exploring learning and unlearning homosexuality are detailed. One of the added features of these chapters is the excellent case materials that are provided to support or refute certain theoretical positions. These materials provide pragmatic evidence as to the utility of any particular theoretical framework and cause the reader to ponder what has been done and continues to be done in the name of science to "cure" those who are not sick.

Hormones, the brain, and genes each have a chapter devoted to them and, along with chapters related to stress and mental traits, comprise the core content of the second section. This section relies on physiological and psychological data to support its
conclusions and does a credible job of integrating science with history. Finally, the remaining chapters analyze current research findings related to the more sociological aspects of sexual orientation. The content related to homosexuality among animals is interesting as it tends to refute the popular belief that birds and bees don’t do it (engage in same-sex sexual activities), and the chapter on homosexuality as a disease reminds us of the reasons for the 1973 APA decision to remove homosexuality from the DSM. While this content, and content related to homosexuality and the law seem out of place in a book entitled *Queer Science*, these chapters do provide interesting, if not mandatory reading for those interested in issues associated with sexual orientation.

LeVay concludes with some thought provoking thoughts about where science on sexual orientation is taking us and finally, after fourteen chapters of trying to discover what makes lesbians lesbian and gay men gay, leaves the reader with the seeming reality that any number of variables including genes, hormones, or psychosocial influences could cause homosexuality. We are then left with something of a conundrum as we continue to wonder about what really causes sexual orientation.

Carol T. Tully, Ph.D.
Tulane University
Despite corporate downsizing and the export of jobs to low income regions of the world, work remains central to the lives of most people. Most people engage in regular employment and most find fulfillment in their careers. Having a job is a key element of modern life.

Despite the importance of work, the authors of this book claim that countless people today are dissatisfied with their jobs. Work has become a means to an end rather than a fulfilling life experience. Employment is the way income is generated to pay bills and meet the many other mundane demands placed on the household economy. Frustrated with their jobs, many people are alienated and disengage from those communal activities which are the essence of a vibrant democracy. No wonder that more and more people fail to vote in elections and that they withdraw from civic affairs.

To reinvigorate American democracy, Boyte and Kari urge that public work again be given the emphasis that it once enjoyed in American society. When groups of citizens join together to improve their communities through communal labor, they become socially committed and responsive to the needs of others. Providing an interesting account of the history of public works in the United States, the authors claim that civic engagement and democratic institutions are improved and that society as a whole benefits. This claim is further supported by positive accounts of people’s involvement in a wide variety of public work activities today.

In addition to its communitarian message, the book provides a useful account of the work programs of the New Deal era as well as many interesting examples of current public work projects. It would have benefited from a more extensive discussion of the role of public work in social welfare. The so-called welfare reforms of recent years have placed great emphasis on moving needy people
off government social programs and into productive work. In view of widespread skepticism about the ability of many welfare recipients to find remunerative employment, a discussion of this kind would have been welcomed. Nevertheless, this is a stimulating book which should provoke much debate.

George Farkas, *Human Capital or Cultural Capital?* New York: Al-dyne de Gruyter, 1996. $42.95 hardcover, $22.95 papercover.

Although the concept of human capital is now well-established in the social sciences, notions of social capital and cultural capital are still poorly defined. But, both are attracting increasing attention as the need to understand the linkages between economic and social phenomena becomes more urgent. Human capital theorists assert that education and skill acquisition should be regarded as productive investments in the economy. Proponents of social capital theory similarly believe that efforts to enhance social integration and promote effective interpersonal networks are investments which enhance economic growth. Cultural capital theorists are not as clear in asserting a direct link with economic development but, as this extremely interesting book reveals, their ideas do have relevance for economic progress.

Farkas defines cultural capital as the “toolkit of skills, habits and styles” which individuals use to construct strategies of action. Recognizing the class linkages which have been emphasized by cultural capital theorists, he contends that individuals from poor communities lack the skills, habits and styles they need to succeed in an increasingly competitive world. Traditional schooling, which focuses on human capital skills acquisition, has not addresses the need for children from deprived communities to enhance their cultural capital and to participate effectively in a dynamic economy.

The book traces the miserable failures of traditional educational approaches directed at children from poor communities. It points out that the vast majority of these children leave school hopelessly unprepared to cope with the demands of the modern economy. Unless attempts are made to enhance their cultural capital, they will be relegated to the margins of society. The author claims that the best mechanism for enhancing cultural capital is the inculcation of reading and writing skills at the primary school
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level. However, conventional methods of literacy development have not been very successful and attempts to enhance these capabilities through one-on-one instruction are very expensive. The book presents an interesting case study of the use of university students to provide one-on-one instruction at low cost in the Dallas public school system. Although the experiment ran into opposition from traditional educational quarters, it demonstrates that the cultural capital of poor children can be enhanced in cost-effective ways.

This book makes an interesting contribution to the growing literature in the field of social investment. Its findings should be more widely applied. It would also be instructive to link human and cultural capital ideas to the notion of social capital. An effective integration of these concepts could form the basis for interesting community based projects which seek to promote development not only in narrow economic terms but in a wider social and cultural context as well.


'Global' and 'globalization' are terms that are now widely used in the social sciences, the media and in popular discourse. While social reality was previously based on local and national conceptions, it is today being enhanced by a greater awareness of international events and a gradual realization that these events impinge with ever greater frequency on local consciousness. The trend towards globalization has been fostered by economic changes, the expansion of electronic and other forms of communications, increased travel and contacts between peoples of different cultures, greater international political cooperation and other changes. Many social scientists argue that these developments will result in a gradual acceptance of the world as a single place rather than a disparate collection of individual nation states.

Yearley had previously published several important books on the sociology of the environment. In this book, he turns his attention to the complex relationship between environmentalism and globalization. While it may, at first, appear that the environmental movement has adopted a truly global perspective to
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Yearly's analysis is incisive and well researched. He does not, however, offer detailed proposals for how the fragmentary tendencies within the environmental movement can be resisted. Although sociologists may not believe that analysis needs to be be linked directly to policy recommendations, the book would have been enhanced by a more thorough discussion of these issues. Nevertheless, this is an interesting work which deserves to be widely read.


In the hundred or so years since Charles Booth first sought to operationalize the concept of poverty and apply it to measure the extent of poverty in London, social scientists have developed a variety of poverty measures. These include absolute poverty lines based on minimum subsistence needs, relative poverty lines, indicators of poverty which utilize secondary data, and the official minimum income standards used by social welfare agencies to determine eligibility for income support. While it would seem
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that there is little more to be added to this extensive corpus of knowledge, Nolan and Wheelan show that much more needs to be done if studies of poverty are to be accurate and useful for policy purposes. They point out that no standardized measure of poverty has yet emerged. Nor is there any consensus about the definition of poverty. Although an extensive literature on the subject is now available, studies of the incidence and nature of poverty are notoriously imprecise and unreliable.

Unfortunately, the authors do not seek to correct this situation. They tend to agree, if somewhat reluctantly, with the prevailing view that it would be futile to attempt to develop a single, standardized definition and measure of poverty. Instead, they offer a more modest refinement of existing approaches based on theoretical concepts of deprivation which move the discussion in the direction of standardization. This approach is illustrated with reference to survey data in Ireland where both authors currently work. In addition, the book provides very useful updates on recent developments in the literature including commentaries on the 'underclass' debate and the writings of Amartya Sen. These are particularly good and will be helpful not only to poverty researchers but to students looking for comprehensive summaries of the field.


Despite having the largest prison population in the industrialized world, political leaders in the United States continue to campaign for tougher sentences, more incarceration and the adoption of ever more punitive approaches to the country's pressing social problems. The United States also leads the world in scientific criminological and penological research but paradoxically, the findings of this research are seldom used to inform policy. While criminologists have long demonstrated that the use of incarceration is an ineffective means of dealing with the majority of criminal offenses, their studies are ignored in the rush to persuade citizens that more and more people need to be imprisoned. As the costs of incarceration escalate, and as the futility of current criminal justice policy become increasingly apparent, the need to
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Jerome Miller’s study shows how the nation’s current obsession with drug suppression has not only failed to eradicate drug use but has created a highly expensive but ineffective system which targets young African American males and channels them into a futile process of arrest, incarceration and recidivism. Young black males encounter the system at an early age and on the basis of relatively minor offenses, begin a career that results in a very high proportion of incarceration among this population group. On release, few are able to find employment and are thus assured of recidivism. Not only are attempts to suppress drug use subverted but whole communities are decimated ensuring the perpetuation of poverty, neglect and crime.

This is a deeply disturbing book but it is also persuasive and readable and deserves to reach a wide audience. However, as the author himself recognizes, the entrenched racism which drives the criminal justice system pervades the wider society as well and, for this reason, its message will be resistant to change. While prospects for reform may be bleak, Miller’s eloquent plea for reason, decency and compassion should be heeded.
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JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WELFARE
1997 PUBLICATION INFORMATION & SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Volume: XXIV
Volume Year: 1997
Publication Period: 1/97 to 12/97
Frequency of Publication: QUARTERLY
Publication Dates: MARCH, JUNE, SEPTEMBER, DECEMBER
Subscription Rates:

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS (Revised June, 1995)

JSSW welcomes a broad range of articles which analyze social welfare institutions, policies, or problems from a social scientific perspective or otherwise attempt to bridge the gap between social science theory and social work practice.

Submission Process. Submit manuscripts to Frederick MacDonald, School of Social Work, Western Michigan University, 1201 Oliver Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 49008. Send three copies together with an abstract of approximately 100 words. Since manuscripts are not returned by reviewers to the editorial office, the editorial office cannot return them to the authors. Submission certifies that it is an original article and that it has not been published nor is being considered for publication elsewhere.

Reviewing normally takes 120 days.

Preparation. Articles should be typed, doublespaced (including the abstract, indented material, footnotes, references, and tables) on 8½ x 11 inch white bond paper with one inch margins on all sides.

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

Style. Overall style should conform to that found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fourth Edition, 1994. Use in-text citations (Reich, 1983), (Reich, 1983, p.5). The use of footnotes in the text is discouraged. If footnotes are essential, include them on a separate sheet after the last page of the references. The use of italics or quotation marks for emphasis is discouraged. Words should be underlined only when it is intended that they be typeset in italics.

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

BOOK REVIEWS

Books for review should be sent to James Midgley, Office of Research and Economic Development, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803.

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