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American Poverty as a Structural Failing: Evidence and Arguments

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Empirical research on American poverty has largely focused on individual characteristics to explain the occurrence and patterns of poverty. The argument in this article is that such an emphasis is misplaced. By focusing upon individual attributes as the cause of poverty, social scientists have largely missed the underlying dynamic of American impoverishment. Poverty researchers have in effect focused on who loses out at the economic game, rather than addressing the fact that the game produces losers in the first place. We provide three lines of evidence to suggest that U.S. poverty is ultimately the result of structural failings at the economic, political, and social levels. These include an analysis into the lack of sufficient jobs in the economy to raise families out of poverty or near poverty; a comparative examination into the high rates of U.S. poverty as a result of the ineffectiveness of the social safety net; and the systemic nature of poverty as indicated by the life course risk of impoverishment experienced by a majority of Americans. We then briefly outline a framework for reinterpreting American poverty. This perspective incorporates the prior research findings that have focused on individual characteristics as important factors in who loses out at the economic game, with the structural nature of American poverty that ensures the existence of economic losers in the first place.
Few questions have generated as much discussion across time as that of the causes of human impoverishment. The sources and origins of poverty have been debated for centuries. As the historian R. M. Hartwell notes, "The causes of poverty, its relief and cure, have been a matter of serious concern to theologians, statesmen, civil servants, intellectuals, tax-payers and humanitarians since the Middle Ages" (1986: 16). The question of causality has found itself at the heart of most debates surrounding poverty and the poor.

In recent times these debates have often been divided into two ideological camps. On one hand, poverty has been viewed as the result of individual failings. From this perspective, specific attributes of the impoverished individual have brought about their poverty. These include a wide set of characteristics, ranging from the lack of an industrious work ethic or virtuous morality, to low levels of education or competitive labor market skills. On the other hand, poverty has periodically been interpreted as the result of failings at the structural level, such as the inability of the economy to produce enough decent paying jobs.

Within the United States, the dominant perspective has been that of poverty as an individual failing. From Ben Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac* to the recent welfare reform changes, poverty has been conceptualized primarily as a consequence of individual failings and deficiencies. Indeed, social surveys asking about the causes of poverty have consistently found that Americans tend to rank individual reasons (such as laziness, lack of effort, and low ability) as the most important factors related to poverty, while structural reasons such as unemployment or discrimination are viewed as significantly less important (Feagin, 1975; Gilens, 1999; Kluegel and Smith, 1986).

This emphasis on individual attributes as the primary cause of poverty has also been reinforced by social scientists engaged in poverty research (O'Connor, 2001). As the social survey has become the dominant methodological approach during the past 50 years, and with multivariate modeling becoming the principal
statistical technique, the research emphasis has increasingly fallen on understanding poverty and welfare dependency in terms of individual attributes. The unit of analysis in these studies is by definition the individual rather than the wider social or economic structures, resulting in statistical models of individual characteristics predicting individual behavior. Consequently, the long standing tension between structural versus individual approaches to explaining poverty has largely been tilted within the empirical poverty research community towards that of the individual. As Alice O’Connor writes,

That this tension has more often been resolved in favor of the individualist interpretation can be seen in several oft-noted features in poverty research. One is the virtual absence of class as an analytic category, at least as compared with more individualized measures of status such as family background and human capital. A similar individualizing tendency can be seen in the reduction of race and gender to little more than demographic, rather than structurally constituted, categories (2001: 9).

The argument in this article is that such an emphasis is misplaced and misdirected. By focusing on individual attributes as the cause of poverty, social scientists have largely missed the underlying dynamic of American impoverishment. Poverty researchers have in effect focused on who loses out at the economic game, rather than addressing the fact that the game produces losers in the first place. An analysis into this underlying dynamic is critical to advancing our state of knowledge regarding American poverty.

Of course, not all social scientists have abandoned the importance of structural considerations with respect to poverty. The work of William Ryan (1971), Michael Katz (1989), Herbert Gans (1995), Douglass Massey (1996) and Joe Feagin (2000) come to mind. However, it should not be a surprise that most of these scholars have taken a theoretical or historical approach, rather than a statistical one. There is a need to articulate the quantitative evidence supporting the argument that U.S. poverty is ultimately the result of structural failings at the economic, political, and social levels.
Current Understanding of American Poverty

The current research emphasis upon understanding American poverty has largely focused on the individual and demographic characteristics of the poor. These characteristics have, in turn, been used to explain why particular individuals and households experience poverty. This approach has revealed the extent to which the risk of poverty varies across particular individual and household attributes.

Repeated cross-sectional national surveys such as the Current Population Survey have indicated that the likelihood of poverty varies sharply with respect to age, race, gender, family structure, and residence. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau (2003a) reports that while the overall U.S. poverty rate in 2002 was 12.1 percent, it was 16.7 percent for children and for those residing in central cities, 24.1 percent for African Americans, and 28.8 percent for persons in female headed households. Other demographic characteristics closely associated with the risk of poverty include giving birth outside of marriage, families with larger numbers of children, and having children at an early age (Maynard, 1997).

In addition, cross-sectional research has shown a close association between human capital characteristics and an individual’s risk of poverty—those who are lacking in human capital are much more likely to experience poverty than individuals with greater levels of human capital. Specifically, lower levels of education, less marketable work skills and experience, and having a physical disability that interferes with an individual’s ability to participate in the labor market are all highly correlated with an elevated risk of poverty (Blank, 1997; Schiller, 2004). On the other hand, research comparing the attitudes and motivation of the poor versus the non-poor, have found relatively few differences between these two groups (Goodwin, 1973; 1983; Lichter and Crowley, 2002; Rank, 1994; Seccombe, 1999) and little in the way of their being a causal factor leading to poverty (Duncan, 1984; Edwards et al., 2001).

Longitudinal studies examining the dynamics of poverty have addressed the length of time and particular factors related to a spell of poverty. This body of work indicates that most spells of
poverty are of modest length. The typical pattern is that households are impoverished for one, two, or three years, and then manage to get above the poverty line (Bane and Ellwood, 1986; Blank, 1997; Duncan, 1984; Walker, 1994). They may stay there for a period of time, only to experience an additional fall into poverty at some later point. For example, Stevens (1994; 1999) calculated that of all persons who had managed to get themselves above the poverty line, over half would return to poverty within five years. Since their economic distance above the poverty threshold is often modest, a detrimental economic or social event can push a household back below the poverty line.

Longitudinal research has also focused on the nature of such events and individual changes that result in a spell of poverty (Devine and Wright, 1993; Duncan, 1984; Walker, 1994). The most important of these have been the loss of employment and earnings, along with changes in family structure. For example, using the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) data, Duncan et al. (1995) found that two thirds of all entries into poverty were associated with either a reduction in work (48 percent) or the loss of work (18 percent). Divorce and separation were associated with triggering approximately 10 percent of all spells of poverty. Blank (1997) found that employment and family structure changes were also influential in ending spells of poverty. Two thirds of those below the poverty line escaped impoverishment as a result of increases in the individual earnings of family members or increases from other sources of income, while the remaining third had their spells of poverty end as a result of changes in family structure (such as marriage or a child leaving the household). In addition, research has shown that illness and incapacitation are also important factors contributing to falls into poverty (Schiller, 2004).

A substantial body of work has also examined the dynamics of welfare use and dependency. This research has shown that individuals utilizing public assistance programs and who experience longer spells of welfare are often at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis the labor market (Bane and Ellwood, 1994; Boisjoly et al., 1998; Harris, 1996; Moffitt, 1992; Pavetti, 1992; Rank, 1988; Sandefur and Cook, 1998). Consequently, those with work disabilities, low education, greater numbers of children, and/or living in inner-
city areas are more likely to extensively utilize the welfare system. The results from these studies largely mirror the findings that have been gathered regarding the length and duration of poverty spells.

The above body of work has provided an important understanding into who are the economic losers in American society. Yet at the same time it has failed to address the question of why there are economic losers in the first place? The premise of this article is that in order answer this question, it is essential to analyze specific failings at the structural level.

The Structural Nature of Poverty

Three lines of evidence are detailed in order to illustrate the structural nature of poverty—1) the inability of the U.S. labor market to provide enough decent paying jobs for all families to avoid poverty or near poverty; 2) the ineffectiveness of American social policy to reduce levels of poverty through governmental social safety net programs; and 3) the fact that the majority of the population will experience poverty during their adult lifetimes, indicative of the systemic nature of U.S. poverty. Each of these lines of evidence are intended to empirically illustrate that American poverty is by and large the result of structural failures and processes.

The Inability of the Labor Market to Support All Families

Several of the pioneering large scale studies of poverty conducted at the end of the 19'th and beginning of the 20'th century focused heavily on the importance of labor market failings to explain poverty. The work of Charles Booth (1892–1897), Seebohm Rowntree (1901), Hull House (1895), Robert Hunter (1904), and W. E. B. DuBois (1899) all emphasized the importance of inadequate wages, lack of jobs, and unstable working conditions as a primary cause of poverty. For example, Rowntree (1901) estimated that approximately 57 percent of individuals in poverty were there as a direct result of labor market failures (low wages, unemployment, irregularity of work).

Yet by the 1960's the emphasis had shifted from a critique of the economic structure as a primary cause of poverty, to an analysis of individual deficiencies (e.g., the lack of human capital) as
the underlying reason for poverty. As Timothy Bartik (2001) notes, U.S. antipoverty policy has focused heavily on labor supply policies (e.g. increasing individual's human capital or incentives to work through welfare reform) rather than labor demand policies (increasing the number and quality of jobs). As mentioned earlier, social scientific research has reinforced this policy approach by focusing on individual deficiencies to explain individual poverty.

Yet it can be demonstrated that irrespective of the specific characteristics that Americans possess, there simply are not enough decent paying jobs to support all of those (and their families) who are looking for work. During the past 25 years the American economy has increasingly produced larger numbers of low paying jobs, jobs that are part-time, and jobs that are lacking in benefits (Seccombe, 2000). For example, the Census Bureau estimated that the median hourly earning of workers who were paid hourly wages in 2000 was $9.91, while at the same time approximately three million Americans were working part-time as a result of the lack of sufficient full-time work being available (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). In addition, 43.6 million Americans were lacking in health insurance, largely because their employer did not provide such benefits (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003b).

Studies analyzing the percentage of the U.S. workforce falling into the low wage sector have shown that a much higher percentage of American workers fall into this category when compared with their counterparts in other developed countries. For example, Smeeding, Rainwater, and Burtless (2000) found that 25 percent of all U.S. full-time workers could be classified as working in low wage work (defined as earning less than 65 percent of the national median earnings on full-time jobs). This was by far the highest percentage of the countries analyzed, with the overall average falling at 12.9 percent.

One of the reasons for this has been the fact that the minimum wage has remained at low levels and has not been indexed to inflation. Changes in the minimum wage must come through Congressional legislation. This often leads to years going by before Congress acts to adjust the minimum wage upward, causing it to lag further behind the cost of living.

Beyond the low wages, part-time work, and lack of benefits, there is also a mismatch between the actual number of available
jobs and the number of those who need them. Economists frequently discuss what is known as a natural unemployment rate—that in order for a free market economy to effectively function, a certain percentage of laborers need to be out of work. For example, full employment would impede the ability of employers to attract and hire workers, particularly within the low wage sector. Consequently, a certain degree of unemployment appears systematic within a capitalist economy, irrespective of the individual characteristics possessed by those participating in that economy.

During the past 40 years, U.S. monthly unemployment rates have averaged between 4 and 10 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). These percentages represent individuals who are out of work but are actively looking for employment. In 2001 this translated into nearly 7 million people unemployed at any particular point in time throughout the year, while over 15 million people experienced unemployment at some point during the year (Schiller, 2004). Certainly some of these individuals have voluntarily left their jobs in order to locate another job (known as frictional unemployment), while in other cases the unemployed may include individuals whose family’s are not dependent upon their job for its economic survival, such as teenagers looking for summer work. Nevertheless, a good proportion of unemployment is the result of involuntary reasons, such as layoffs and downsizing, directly affecting millions of heads of households.

Bartik (2001; 2002) used several different approaches and assumptions to estimate the number of jobs that would be needed to significantly address the issue of poverty in the United States. Data were analyzed from the 1998 Current Population Survey. His conclusion? Even in the booming economy of the late 1990’s, between five and nine million more jobs were needed in order to meet the needs of the poor and disadvantaged.

The structural failing of the labor market to support the pool of labor that currently exists can be further illustrated through an analysis of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The SIPP is a large ongoing longitudinal study that interviews households every four months over the course of three or four years, gathering detailed monthly information regarding individual’s employment and income across these periods of time. It allows one to map the patterns of labor force participation for a
large nationally representative sample (for an in-depth discussion of the history, methodology, and specific details of the SIPP data set, see Westat, 2001).

An analysis of the SIPP illustrates the mismatch between the number of jobs in the labor market that will enable a family to subsist above the threshold of poverty, versus the number of heads of families in need of such jobs. Table 1 is based upon the jobs and work behavior of family heads across all 12 months of 1999. From this we can estimate the annual number of hours worked, the annual amount of pay received, and whether such earnings were sufficient to raise a family above the poverty line. The analysis is confined to heads of families who are between the ages of 18 and 64.

In Table 1, we examine whether the jobs that family heads were working at during the year were able to get their current families out of poverty. Three poverty thresholds are examined—below 1.00 (the official poverty line); below 1.25 of the poverty line (the official poverty line raised by 25 percent); and below 1.50 of the poverty line (the official poverty line raised by 50 percent). To illustrate, the poverty line for a family of 4 in 1999 was $17,029. Consequently the 1.25 poverty threshold for this family would be $21,286, while the 1.50 poverty threshold would be $25,544. These thresholds provide us with several alternative levels of poverty and near poverty.

Our focus is on the availability of jobs in the labor market to lift various families out of poverty. We examine this question for three different populations of family heads who are in the labor market. The first panel focuses only on those heads of families who are working full-time throughout the year (defined as averaging 35 or more hours per week across the 52 weeks of the year). The second panel includes those working full-time as well as those who are working at least half-time throughout the year (defined as working an average of 20 or more hours per week across 52 weeks). The third panel includes all heads of families in the labor market (defined as any head of family who has either worked at some point during the year or who has been actively looking for work).

For those employed full-time during 1999, 9.4 percent are working in jobs where their annual earnings will not get their
Table 1

*Inability of the Labor Market to Support Various Family Structures Above Different Poverty Thresholds*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty Threshold</th>
<th>All Families</th>
<th>Married Couple Families</th>
<th>One Parent Families</th>
<th>Single Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Families Working Full-Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.00</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.25</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.50</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>9,891</td>
<td>6,053</td>
<td>1,557</td>
<td>2,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Families Working Half-Time or More</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.00</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.25</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.50</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>11,312</td>
<td>6,623</td>
<td>1,969</td>
<td>2,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Families in the Labor Market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.00</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.25</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.50</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>12,190</td>
<td>6,972</td>
<td>2,259</td>
<td>2,959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, authors' computations

families above the poverty line, 15.3 percent are at jobs in which their earnings will not get their families above 1.25 of the poverty line, and 22.0 percent are employed at jobs that will not get their families above 1.50 of the poverty line. We can clearly see that the jobs one parent family heads are working at are much less able to sustain these households above the level of poverty than that for all families. On the other hand, single men and women are more likely to be able to lift themselves out of poverty through their work. Married couples fall in between these two family types (it should be kept in mind that for these couples, we are only focusing on the ability of the family head's job to lift the household
above the threshold of poverty, rather than the earnings of both partners).

The middle panel illustrates that if we include family heads who are working either full-time or at least half-time throughout the year, nearly 15 percent were working at jobs in which their income would not raise their families above the poverty line, 21.4 percent were at jobs that would not get their families over 1.25 of the poverty line, while 28 percent fell below 1.50 of the poverty line. Finally, the bottom panel includes all family heads that were in the labor market at some point during the year. Here we can see that the percentages for the three poverty thresholds are 20.3, 26.5, and 32.7.

Consequently, depending on the level of poverty and the size of the pool of labor, the failure of the labor market to raise families out of poverty ranges from 9.4 percent (utilizing the official poverty line for those working full-time) to 32.7 percent (applying 1.50 of the poverty line for all who are in the labor market). To use an analogy that will be developed later, the supply of jobs versus the demand for labor might be thought of as an ongoing game of musical chairs. That is, there is a finite number of jobs available in the labor market that pay enough to support a family above the threshold of poverty (which might be thought of as the chairs in this analogy). On the other hand, the amount of labor, as represented by the number of family heads in the labor market (and hence the players in the game), is greater than the number of adequately paying jobs. As indicated in Table 1, this imbalance ranges from 9.4 percent to 32.7 percent. Consequently, the structure of the labor market basically ensures that some families will lose out at this musical chairs game of finding a decent paying job able to lift a family above the threshold of poverty.

Table 2 illustrates this in a slightly different fashion. Here we estimate the earnings capacity of jobs held by family heads to support various hypothetical family sizes above our three different thresholds of poverty. What is clear from this table is that for the pool of family heads who are working full-time, the jobs that they are employed at are quite able to support a one or two person family above the official poverty line. For example, only 2.4 percent are in full-time jobs in which their earnings would not
Table 2
Inability of the Labor Market to Support Various Family Sizes Above Different Poverty Thresholds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty Threshold</th>
<th>1 Person Family</th>
<th>2 Person Family</th>
<th>3 Person Family</th>
<th>4 Person Family</th>
<th>5 Person Family</th>
<th>6 Person Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.00</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.25</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.50</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heads of Families Working Full-Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty Threshold</th>
<th>1 Person Family</th>
<th>2 Person Family</th>
<th>3 Person Family</th>
<th>4 Person Family</th>
<th>5 Person Family</th>
<th>6 Person Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.00</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.25</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.50</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heads of Families Working Half-Time or More

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty Threshold</th>
<th>1 Person Family</th>
<th>2 Person Family</th>
<th>3 Person Family</th>
<th>4 Person Family</th>
<th>5 Person Family</th>
<th>6 Person Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.00</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.25</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1.50</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, authors' computations

raise a one person family above the official poverty line, while 4.7 percent of family heads are working at jobs that would not raise a family of two above the poverty line.

However, as we look at the ability of such jobs to get larger sized families above the thresholds of poverty, we can see their increasing failure to do so. Consequently, 15 percent of these jobs will not raise a family of four above 1.00 of the poverty line. At the 1.25 level the figure is 25.1 percent, and at the 1.50 level it is 36 percent. Thus, the current supply of full-time jobs in the labor market would appear able to lift most one or two person families out of poverty, but it becomes much less effective in raising moderate sized families out of poverty. As we include family heads who are working at least half-time (the middle panel of Table 2) or who are in the labor market (the bottom panel of Table 2) the percentages rise significantly.
Finally, we can illustrate this in yet another manner. Using the SIPP data again for 1999, we estimated the annual average hourly wages for heads of families. This analysis indicates that 12.1 percent of family heads were working at jobs which paid an average of less than 6 dollars an hour, 21.2 percent worked at jobs paying less than 8 dollars an hour, 31.7 percent worked at jobs paying less than 10 dollars an hour, and 42.7 percent were earning less than 12 dollars an hour. In order to raise a family of three above the official poverty line in 1999 one would have to be working full-time (defined as averaging 35 hours per week across the 52 weeks of the year) at $7.30 an hour, and for a family of four the figure would be $9.36 an hour. The fact that nearly one third of family heads are working at jobs paying less than $10.00 an hour, is indicative of the significant risk of poverty that they face.

To summarize, the data presented in this section indicates that a major factor leading to poverty in the United States is a failing of the economic structure to provide viable opportunities for all who are participating in that system. In particular, the labor market simply does not provide enough decent paying jobs for all who need them. As a result, millions of families find themselves struggling below or precariously close to the poverty line.

The Ineffectiveness of the Social Safety Net to Prevent Poverty

A second major structural failure is found at the political level. Contrary to the popular rhetoric of vast amounts of tax dollars being spent on public assistance, the American welfare state, and particularly its social safety net, can be more accurately described in minimalist terms (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Compared to other Western industrialized countries, the United States devotes far fewer resources to programs aimed at assisting the economically vulnerable (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1999). As Charles Noble writes, "The U.S. welfare state is striking precisely because it is so limited in scope and ambition" (1997: 3).

On the other hand, most European countries provide a wide range of social and insurance programs that largely prevent families from falling into poverty. These include substantial family or children's allowances, designed to transfer cash assistance to families with children. Unemployment assistance is far more
generous in these countries than in the United States, often providing support for more than a year following the loss of a job. Furthermore, universal health coverage is routinely provided, along with considerable support for child care.

The result of these social policy differences is that they substantially reduce the extent of poverty in Europe and Canada, while U.S. social policy has had only a small impact upon poverty reduction. As Rebecca Blank notes, "the national choice in the United States to provide relatively less generous transfers to low-income families has meant higher relative poverty rates in the country. While low-income families in the United States work more than in many other countries, they are not able to make up for lower governmental income support relative to their European counterparts" (Blank, 1997: 141-142).

This effect can be clearly seen in Table 3. The data in this table are based upon an analysis of the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) conducted by Veli-Matti Ritakallio (2001). Initiated in the 1980s, the LIS contains income and demographic information on households in over 25 different nations from 1967 to the present. Variables have been standardized across 70 data sets, allowing researchers to conduct cross-national analyses regarding poverty and the effectiveness of governmental programs in alleviating such poverty (for further detail regarding the LIS, see Luxembourg Income Study, 2000). Poverty in this analysis is defined as being in a household in which its disposable income is less than one half of the median annual income.

Table 3 compares eight European countries and Canada with the United States in terms of their pre-transfer and post-transfer rates of poverty. The pre-transfer rates (column one) indicate what the level of poverty would be in each country in the absence of any governmental income transfers such as welfare payments, unemployment compensation, or social security payments. The post-transfer rates (column two) represent the level of poverty after governmental transfers are included (which is how poverty is officially measured in the United States and many other countries). In-kind benefits such as medical insurance are not included in the analysis. Comparing these two levels of poverty (column three) reveals how effective (or ineffective) governmental policy is in reducing the overall extent of poverty in a country.
Table 3
Comparative Analysis of Governmental Effectiveness in Reducing Poverty Across Selected Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Pre-transfer Poverty Rates</th>
<th>Post-transfer Poverty Rates</th>
<th>Reduction Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada (1994)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland (1995)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (1994)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (1994)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands (1994)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway (1995)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (1995)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom (1995)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States (1994)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Luxembourg Income Study, adapted from Veli-Matti Ritakallio (2001) computations

Looking first at the rates of pre-transfer poverty, we can see that the United States is on the lower end of the scale. Norway’s pre-transfer poverty rate is 27 percent, followed by the United States, Canada, and Germany at 29 percent. The Netherlands pre-transfer rate is 30 percent, Finland stands at 33 percent, Sweden is at 36 percent, the United Kingdom rate is 38 percent, and finally, France possesses the highest level of pre-transfer poverty at 39 percent.

When we examine the post-transfer rates of poverty found in column two, a dramatic reversal takes place in terms of where the United States stands vis-a-vis the comparison countries. The average post-transfer poverty rate for the eight comparison countries in Table 3 is 7 percent, whereas the United States’ post-transfer poverty rate stands at 18 percent. As a result of their more active social policies, Canada and the European countries are able to significantly cut their overall rates of poverty. For example, Sweden is able to reduce the number of people that would be poor (in the absence of any governmental help) by 92 percent as a result of social policies. The overall average reduction factor for the eight countries is 79 percent. In contrast, the United States
poverty reduction factor is only 38 percent (with much of this being the result of Social Security).

Table 3 clearly illustrates a second major structural failing leading to the high rates of U.S. poverty. It is a failure at the political and policy level. Specifically, social and economic programs directed to the economically vulnerable populations in the United States are minimal in their ability to raise families out of poverty. While America has always been a "reluctant welfare state," the past 25 years have witnessed several critical retrenchments and reductions in the social safety net. These reductions have included scaling back both the amount of benefits being transferred, as well as a tightening of program eligibility (Noble, 1997; Patterson, 2000). In addition, the United States has failed to offer the type of universal coverage for child care, medical insurance, or child allowances that most other developed countries routinely provide. As a result, the overall U.S. poverty rates remain at extremely high levels.

Once again, this failure has virtually nothing to do with the individual. Rather it is emblematic of a failure at the structural level. By focusing on individual characteristics, we lose sight of the fact that governments can and do exert a sizeable impact on reducing the extent of poverty within their jurisdictions. In the analysis presented here, Canada and Europe are able to lift a significant percentage of their economically vulnerable above the threshold of poverty through governmental transfer and assistance policies. In contrast, the United States provides substantially less support through its social safety net, resulting in poverty rates that are currently the highest in the industrialized world.

The one case where the U.S. has effectively reduced the rate of poverty for a particular group has been that of the elderly. Their substantial reduction in the risk of poverty over the past 40 years has been directly attributed to the increasing generosity of the Social Security program, as well as the introduction of Medicare in 1965 and the Supplemental Security Income Program in 1974. During the 1960's and 1970's, Social Security benefits were substantially increased and indexed to the rate of inflation, helping many of the elderly escape from poverty. It is estimated today that without the Social Security program, the poverty rate for the elderly would be close to 50 percent (rather than its current
10 percent). Put another way, Social Security is responsible for getting 80 percent of the elderly above the poverty line who would otherwise be poor in its absence.

The Widespread Life Course Risk of Poverty

A third approach revealing the structural nature of American poverty can be found in a life course analysis of poverty. As discussed earlier, previous work on poverty has examined the cross-sectional and spell dynamic risk. Yet there is another way in which the incidence of poverty can be examined. Such an approach places the risk of poverty within the context of the American life course. By doing so, the systematic nature of American poverty can be revealed.

The work of Rank and Hirschl (1999a; 1999b; 1999c; 2001a; 2001b) has developed this approach. Building upon the longitudinal design of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Rank and Hirschl have utilized a technique for constructing a series of life tables estimating the probability that Americans will experience poverty at some point during their adulthood (see Rank and Hirschl, 2001c, for a more detailed description of their methodology and approach, and Hill, 1992, for a further discussion of the PSID).

Table 4 is based upon three separate life tables estimating the age specific and cumulative probabilities of experiencing poverty between the ages of 20 and 75 for the following poverty thresholds—1.00 (the official poverty line); 1.25 (the poverty line raised by 25 percent), and 1.50 (the poverty line raised by 50 percent). Table 4 reports the cumulative percentages of the American population that will encounter poverty at various points of adulthood.

At age 20 (the starting point of the analysis), we can see that 10.6 percent of Americans fell below the poverty line (which is similar to the cross-sectional rate of poverty for 20 year olds), with 15 percent falling below the 1.25 threshold and 19.1 percent falling below the 1.50 threshold. By the age of 35, the percent of Americans experiencing poverty has increased sharply—31.4 percent of Americans have experienced at least one year below the poverty line; 39 percent have experienced at least one year below 1.25 of the poverty line; and 46.9 percent have experienced
Table 4
The Cumulative Percent of Americans Experiencing Poverty Across Adulthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Below 1.00 Poverty Line</th>
<th>Below 1.25 Poverty Line</th>
<th>Below 1.50 Poverty Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panel Study of Income Dynamics, authors' computations

a year below 1.50 of the poverty line. At age 55 the percentages stand at 45.0, 52.8, and 61.0, and by the age of 75, they have risen to 58.5 percent, 68 percent and 76 percent.

What these numbers indicate is that a clear majority of Americans will at some point experience poverty during their lifetimes. Rather than an isolated event that occurs only among what has been labeled the "underclass," the reality is that the majority of Americans will encounter poverty firsthand during their adult- 
hoods.

Such patterns illuminate the systematic essence of American poverty, which in turn points to the structural nature of poverty. Occasionally we can physically see widespread examples of this. For instance, the economic collapse during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Given the enormity of this collapse, it became clear to many Americans that most of their neighbors were not directly responsible for the dire economic situation they found themselves
This awareness helped provide much of the impetus and justification behind the New Deal (Patterson, 2000).

Similarly, the existence of the "other" America as noted by Michael Harrington (1962) during the early 1960's, pointed again to the widespread nature of U.S. poverty. The other America was represented by the extremely high rates of poverty found in economically depressed areas such as rural Appalachia and the urban inner city. The War on Poverty during the 1960's was an attempt to address these large scale structural pockets of poverty amidst plenty.

The analysis in this section indicates that poverty may be as widespread and systematic today as in these more visible examples. Yet we have been unable to see this as a result of not looking in the right direction. By focusing on the life span risks, the prevalent nature of American poverty is revealed. At some point during adulthood, the bulk of Americans will face impoverishment. The approach of emphasizing individual failings or attributes as the primary cause of poverty loses much of its explanatory power in the face of such patterns. Rather, given the widespread occurrence of economic vulnerability, a life span analysis points to a third line of evidence indicating that poverty is more appropriately viewed as a structural failing of American society. As C. Wright Mills notes in his analysis of unemployment,

> When, in a city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals (1959: 9).

To summarize, three lines of evidence have been detailed suggesting that American poverty is primarily the result of structural conditions. These include a lack of sufficient paying jobs in the labor market, the ineffectiveness of America's social safety net to pull individuals and families out of poverty, and the fact that a
clear majority of Americans will experience poverty at some point during their adulthood years. Other structural failings could have been explored as well (e.g., the inequities in educational quality in the United States, the systematic lack of political power for the economically disenfranchised, or the widespread patterns of racial residential segregation, to name but a few). Nevertheless, the lines of evidence discussed in this section would appear particularly illuminating in revealing the structural nature of American poverty.

Discussion

Given the above arguments and evidence indicating that American poverty is primarily the result of structural failings, how might we reconcile this perspective with the earlier discussed research findings indicating that human capital and individual attributes largely explain who is at risk of experiencing poverty? An approach that bridges the empirical importance of individual attributes with the significance of structural forces has been the concept of structural vulnerability (Rank, 1994; 2000; 2001; 2004). This framework recognizes that human capital and other labor market attributes are associated with who loses out at the economic game (and hence will be more likely to experience poverty), but that structural factors predominately ensure that there will be losers in the first place.

An analogy can be used to illustrate the basic concept. Imagine a game of musical chairs in which there are ten players but only eight chairs. On one hand, individual success or failure in the game depends on the skill and luck of each player. Those who are less agile or less well placed when the music stops are more likely to lose. These are appropriately cited as the reasons a particular individual has lost the game. On the other hand, given that there are only eight chairs available, two players are bound to lose regardless of their characteristics. Even if all the players were suddenly to double their speed and agility, there would still be two losers. From this broader context, the characteristics of the individual players are no longer important in terms of understanding that the structure of the game ensures that someone must inevitably lose.
We would argue that this analogy applies with respect to poverty. For every ten American households, there are good jobs and opportunities at any point in time to adequately support roughly eight of those ten. The remaining two households will be locked out of such opportunities, often resulting in poverty or near poverty. Individuals experiencing such economic deprivation are likely to have characteristics putting them at a disadvantage in terms of competing in the economy (lower education, fewer skills, single-parent families, illness or incapacitation, minorities residing in inner cities, etc.). These characteristics help to explain why particular individuals and households are at a greater risk of poverty.

However, given the earlier discussed structural failures, a certain percentage of the American population will experience economic vulnerability regardless of what their characteristics are. As in the musical chairs analogy, increasing everyone’s human capital will do little to alter the fact that there are only so many decent paying jobs available. In such a case, employers will simply raise the bar in terms of the employee qualifications they are seeking, but nevertheless there will remain a percentage of the population at risk of economic deprivation. Consequently, although a lack of human capital and its accompanying vulnerability leads to an understanding of who the losers of the economic game are likely to be, the structural components of our economic, social, and political systems explain why there are losers in the first place.

The critical mistake that has been made in the past has been that social scientists have frequently equated the question of who loses out at the game, with the question of why the game produces losers in the first place. They are, in fact, distinct and separate questions. While deficiencies in human capital and other marketable characteristics help to explain who in the population is at a heightened risk of encountering poverty, the fact that poverty exists in the first place results not from these characteristics, but from the lack of decent opportunities and supports in society. By focusing solely upon individual characteristics, such as education, we can shuffle people up or down in terms of their being more likely to land a job with good earnings, but we are still going to have somebody lose out if there are not enough decent
paying jobs to go around. In short, we are playing a large scale version of a musical chairs game with ten players but only eight chairs.

The recognition of this dynamic represents a fundamental shift in thinking from the old paradigm. It helps to explain why the social policies of the past two decades have largely been ineffective in reducing the rates of poverty. We have focused our attention and resources on either altering the incentives and disincentives for those playing the game, or in a very limited way, upgrading their skills and ability to compete in the game, while at the same time leaving the structure of the game untouched.

When the overall poverty rates in the United States do in fact go up or down, they do so primarily as a result of impacts on the structural level that increase or decrease the number of available chairs. In particular, the performance of the economy has been historically important. Why? Because when the economy is expanding, more opportunities (or chairs) are available for the competing pool of labor and their families. The reverse occurs when the economy slows down and contracts. Consequently, during the 1930’s or early 1980’s when the economy was doing badly, poverty rates went up, while during periods of economic prosperity such as the 1960’s or the middle to later 1990’s, the overall rates of poverty declined.

Similarly, changes in various social supports and the social safety net available to families will make a difference in terms of how well such households are able to avoid poverty or near poverty. When such supports were increased through the War on Poverty initiatives in the 1960’s, poverty rates declined. Likewise, when Social Security benefits were expanded during the 1960’s and 1970’s, the elderly’s poverty rates declined precipitously. Conversely, when social supports have been weakened and eroded, as in the case of children’s programs over the past 25 years, their rates of poverty have gone up.

The recognition of poverty as a result of the way the game is structured also makes it quite clear why the United States has such high rates of poverty when compared to other Western countries. These rates have nothing to do with Americans being less motivated or less skilled than those in other countries, but
with the fact that our economy has been producing a plethora of low wage jobs in the face of global competition and that our social policies have done relatively little to support families compared to our European neighbors. From this perspective, one of the keys to addressing poverty is to increase the labor market opportunities and social supports available to American households.

The structural vulnerability perspective thus recognizes the importance of human capital in being able to predict who is more likely to experience economic deprivation, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of structural constraints in guaranteeing that some Americans will be left out of the economic mainstream. In short, the structure of the American economy, accompanied by a weak social safety net and public policies directed to the economically vulnerable, ensure that a certain percentage of the American population will experience impoverishment at any point in time, and that a much larger percentage of the population will experience poverty over the course of a lifetime. The fact that three quarters of Americans will experience poverty or near poverty (at the 1.50 level) during their adulthoods is emblematic of these structural level failings.

As noted at the beginning of this article, social scientists investigating poverty have largely focused upon individual deficiencies and demographic attributes in order to explain the occurrence of poverty in America. As such, they have reinforced the mainstream American ethos of interpreting social problems as primarily the result of individual failings. In addition, a culture of poverty perspective has occasionally been used to explain the occurrence of poverty within specific geographical settings such as inner cities or remote rural areas. This approach also tends to largely place the dynamic of poverty within the framework of individual deficiencies.

We have argued and attempted to demonstrate in this article that such perspectives are misguided. Whereas individual attributes (such as human capital) help to explain who faces a greater risk of experiencing poverty at any point in time, the fact that substantial poverty exists on a national level can only be understood through an analysis of the structural dynamics of American society.
References


American Poverty


Shift Work and Negative Work-to-Family Spillover

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A representative sample of the U.S. workforce from 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce data (Families & Work Institute, 1999) was examined to study the relationship between shift work and negative work-to-family spillover. Negative spillover was measured by Likert-scale frequency responses to questions concerning mood, energy, and time for family as functions of one's job. Statistical analyses comprised t-tests, ANOVAs, and multiple regressions. Among wage earners with families (n = 2,429), shift work showed a significant, strong, positive relationship to high negative work-to-family spillover when controlling for standard demographic characteristics as well as education and occupation. Distinctions among evening, night, rotating and split shifts revealed the highest negative spillover for rotating shift workers. Additional work-related factors influencing negative spillover included number of work hours, preference for fewer work hours (positive associations), supervisory support, job autonomy, and a family-supportive job culture (negative associations).

Keywords: shift work, wage earners, families, job autonomy, spillover, work-week, dual wage earners, productivity

The area of research recognized as "work-family" began with Kanter's 1977 book in which she dismissed the "myth of separate worlds." The theoretical model of segmentation, claiming that work and family were entirely separate, to explain the relationship between work and family, was no longer relevant. Since Kanter's (1977) seminal work initiated a new perspective on work and family, a variety of theoretical models have developed to explain the relationship between work and family. These include
spillover, compensation, and conflict theories (Young and Kleiner, 1992). Spillover is one focus of this paper.

The nature of work and its impact on family life has been a growing area of interest and concern during the past twenty to thirty years in the industrialized countries as women have entered the labor force at increasing rates. The current study investigated the relationship between negative spillover and shift work. Spillover refers to the transfer of mood, energy, and skills from one sphere to the other. Negative spillover suggests bad moods and low energy resulting from one arena impacting the other. "Shift work" refers to a job schedule in which employees work hours other than the "standard" hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or other than the standard workweek, Mondays through Fridays in the United States.

Shift work is an important area of study because the percentage of the U.S. labor force engaged in shift work has been rising steadily. Estimates range from 15% (Seward, 1997) to 45% (Presser, 1995), varying due in part to diverse definitions. Among dual-earner families, 51% with children under 15 include at least one parent who works non-standard shifts (Deutsch, 1999).

The study presented here draws on the literature of two related fields, the spillover model of work-family, and shift work, in order to examine an intersecting point of interest. The research question this study addressed was: What association, if any, does shift work have to negative work-to-family spillover (NWFSp)?

Background

Spillover

Much of the work-family research during the last 20 years has concentrated on which model or models best illustrate the connection between work and family. A good deal of literature has focused on positive and negative spillover as operating in both directions, i.e., work affecting family and family affecting work (Zedeck, 1992). Concurrently, much research has concentrated on role conflict in that working family members find their roles as parents or spouses conflicting with their roles as employees in terms of time, energy, and character traits that each arena requires (Bailyn, 1993; Burke & Bradshaw, 1981; Howard, 1992). However, Barnett, Marshall, and Singer (1992) and Barnett and Hyde (2001),
dispute this position and demonstrate that multiple roles enhance well-being. Role quality, not the number of roles, is crucial in determining working parents' welfare.

One aspect of assuming multiple roles is that time spent at a job usually implies time away from family. It is well documented that U.S. workers have longer workweeks than workers from other industrialized countries. A 1999 International Labor Organization report (Hochschild, 2001) found that U.S. workers now are ahead of Japanese workers, the previous "leader" in this role. In their longitudinal study of a representative sample of U.S. workers, the Families and Work Institute (1999) established that the average number of work hours per week increased significantly from 43.1 in 1977 to 47.1 in 1997.

Apart from the amount of time spent away from family is the issue of the worker's mood, energy level, etc., when s/he returns home after a long day at work. A range of literature focuses on job stress and its accompanying problems for families. Chan and Margolin (1994) demonstrated via narrative self-reports that married workers' degree of fatigue correlated negatively with positive home affect and positively with home fatigue. Some studies have compared dual-earner families to single-earner families (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994).

Spillover is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. Talents developed at work such as budgeting or accounting may apply to managing household finances. Organizational skills learned in the context of arranging children's school activities, grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning might be relevant to time management in the workplace. However, a substantial majority of spillover literature discusses negative spillover, the transfer of bad moods, low energy, and fatigue resulting from the work environment and affecting the family. While studies do examine negative family-to-work spillover, or the phenomenon of family problems interfering with work productivity (Friedman & Galinsky, 1992; Ironson, 1992; Brett et al., 1992), the focus of most work-family research including the current paper is on NWFSp.

The major models competing with spillover are compensation and conflict. Compensation theory claims that work and family are complementary. Employees unfulfilled in their home life seek happiness at work and spouses/parents dissatisfied with their jobs look for enjoyment in their family life. Conflict theory posits
that work and family compete. In order to achieve benefits from one, it is necessary to give up certain objectives in the other. An example would be spending less time with a child in order to obtain promotions (Young & Kleiner, 1992).

While much research claims to support one of the three principal models of spillover, compensation, or conflict, a number of studies suggest that a combination of models plays a role in explaining relationships between work and family. Lambert (1990) views the three major models as overlapping and often simultaneous rather than competing. She classifies spillover into direct spillover, arising from objective aspects of work or family conditions such as wages and number of children and indirect spillover stemming from subjective elements including job or family satisfaction. Other researchers point to different models being prominent under certain circumstances. Spillover and conflict theory proponents claim that demands of work and family, especially on a person's time, are incompatible and that conflict is detrimental to satisfaction with each arena (Burke, 1988; Greenhaus et al., 1989). Much of the empirical research shows that work-family conflict and work-family spillover constitute more of a problem than family-work conflict and family-work spillover (Galinsky et al., 1993). The principal goal of the current study was to examine relationships of work characteristics, especially shift work, with NWFSp.

Bowen (1995) views spillover as consisting of structural and dynamic components, consequences of the corporate work culture. The structural aspects include salaries, benefits, and work hours. The dynamic elements refer to what many researchers label work culture. These comprise job autonomy, opportunity for career advancement, and relationships with supervisors and coworkers (Haley, Perry-Jenkins, & Armenia, 2001). The current study investigates the impact of the structural features of shift work along with the dynamic variables of job autonomy, supervisor support, and an overall family-friendly job culture on NWFSp.

**Work Hours and Shift Work**

Scholars have documented the changes over time in the normative standards of work and family. For example, Schor (1991) shows how people have increased the number of hours they
work per year during the previous 500 years; and many other writers discuss the more recent phenomenon of women, single, married, and with young children entering and staying in the labor force (Coontz, 1997; Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998; Waite & Nielsen, 2001).

One of the most noteworthy consequences of these changes has been the increase in the percentage of U.S. workers performing shift work. Presser (1998), an expert on shift work and families, discusses her contention that the entrance of women into the labor force has led to an increased demand for service-sector jobs after standard work hours resulting in this upsurge. Shift work tends to predominate in certain occupational fields and occur rarely in others. Contemporary shift workers are primarily blue-collar, in jobs as police, and fire fighters (Simon, 1990; Deutsch, 1999), part of the well-paid service sector. The recent increase in shift workers has occurred chiefly in the low-wage service sector, where women are the principal employees.

Most research concerning shift work has focused on its effects on worker health. Shift work, disturbs the sleep patterns of workers, reduces efficiency and productivity, leads to mistakes and accidents, and is associated with higher rates of hypertension (Morikawa et al., 1999), gastrointestinal disorders, depression, and cardiovascular diseases (Costa, 1996). Costa's (1996) literature review refers to evidence that shift work causes hardships in sustaining family relationships and leads to detrimental consequences for marriages and children. Shift-working women encounter more stress than their male peers because of the extra parental and spousal responsibilities women are usually expected to meet. Spillover, thus, appears to be gendered due to differential expectations society has for women and men and a result of conflicting demands on time that both work and family impose.

Research on family and shift work indicates that families of shift workers experience a higher percentage of divorces (White & Keith, 1990; Presser, 2000), lower marital satisfaction (Costa, 1996), lower satisfaction in relationships with children (Rahman & Pal, 1994), and higher stress levels (Simon, 1990) than their non-shift working peers. Because divorce statistics represent indicators of marital dissatisfaction, it is important to pinpoint underlying factors contributing to the dissatisfaction. NWFSp is a measurable
concept and a likely contributor to divorce, hardships for children, and difficulties in working parents' relationships with children.

While there is an abundance of literature on NWFSp, many studies on the impact of shift work on worker health, and research on shift work and family outcomes (Presser, 1998, 2000; Deutsch, 1999), no study has examined shift work and the dependent variable, NWFSp. The present study was an attempt to fill that research gap. Its purpose was to examine a representative sample of U.S. workers to determine if shift work has an association with NWFSp.

Methodology

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated:

1. \( H_a \): Based on a nationally representative sample of workers, the NWFSp of shift workers is significantly higher than the spillover of employees who work standard hours.

2. \( H_a \): More specifically, examining the categories of day, evening, night, rotating, and split shifts, workers exhibit progressively more NWFSp in order from day to split shifts.

3. \( H_a \): Workers with increased number of work hours per week demonstrate higher NWFSp.

4. \( H_a \): Workers who indicate a preference for fewer or more work hours than their current schedules offer, manifest higher NWFSp than do those who prefer their current schedules.

5. \( H_a \): Work characteristics other than shift act as predictors of NWFSp. As job autonomy, supervisory support, and a family-friendly job culture increase, the magnitude of NWFSp decreases.

The definitions presented in the F&WI interview data for different types of shift work follow. No explanation of specific hours for "Evening" or "Night" was offered to participants. In general, evening shifts occur between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and midnight. "Night" shifts generally take place between midnight and 8:00 a.m. The F&WI defined "Rotating" shifts as those that change periodically from day to evening or night, "Split" shifts as
consisting of two distinct periods each workday, and "Flexible" shifts as those with no set hours (F&WI, 1999).

Data

Data from the Families and Work Institute (F&WI) National Study of the Changing Workforce (1999) constituted the basis for the study. The Families and Work Institute is a non-profit research organization in New York City. Every five years, as part of its longitudinal study, it surveys by phone a representative sample of U.S. workers on work and family issues.

Between March 14, 1997 and July 27, 1997 Louis Harris and Associates conducted a survey developed by the F&WI. A total of 3,739 households contacted were eligible. Of these, 3,552 interviews took place, resulting in a response rate of 95%. Of the 3,552 sample subjects, 2,877 were wage and salary workers; the others self-employed. For further details, please see the F&WI (1999) National Study of the Changing Workforce Guide to Public Use Files.

Current Study Sample

The 1997 data containing information about 3,552 U.S. workers were analyzed to test the hypotheses listed above. Because the goal of the study was to investigate family outcomes, analyses included only workers with families. Because many of the work-related variables had missing values for the self-employed part of the sample, only wage earners were kept.

The sample was examined by shift for associations to self-employed and family statuses. While it was conceivable that, for example, people on rotating shifts postponed having families or people with families did not take night jobs, this was not the case for our sample. Most people in each shift (82%-86%) had families and there were no significant differences by shift. The definition of "Have families" was living with a partner/spouse or living with one or more children or any combination of these. Not surprisingly, there was a noticeable difference by shift in that fully 48% of people reporting a flexible schedule were self-employed. Split shifts also were disproportionately high in self-employed status (23%). However, split shifts represented such a minute percentage of the overall sample (1.2%) that it is not possible to
draw conclusions from this concerning the relationship between shifts and self-employed status. In any case, the self-employed and those living alone were left out of further analyses.

The distribution by shift of the resulting sample of wage earners with families (n = 2,429) follows. Day workers composed 72.4%. Ten percent reported working flexible shifts. Rotating shift workers constituted 5.9%. Evening, night, and split shift workers comprised 4.5%, 4.2%, and 1.2%, respectively. The 1.7% who did not fit any categories listed was classified as “Other.”

**Demographic Characteristics**

A majority (55%) were between ages 33 and 51, 30.4% were younger than 33, and 14.7% were over 52. The gender distribution was close to half women and half men. A large majority (78.7%) were non-Hispanic whites, 12.4% were African-American, and 8.9% “other.” Household income ranged from 0 to $1 million with a median of $45,849, and a mean of $57,355. Most sample participants (71.7%) were living with a spouse or partner. A small percentage (22.3%) resided with their own children under six years old.

**Variables and Analyses**

The focus of the study was on the dependent variable negative work-to-family spillover (NWFSp). Negative work-to-family spillover was assessed via a five-point Likert scale. It was a continuous variable derived from the mean score of five items, each a Likert scale. The values ranged from a low of 1 to a high of 5. The scale referred to frequency of occurrence of the items as follows: (1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Often (5) Always.

Interviewers asked participants to respond to each of the following questions:

“In the past three months, how often have/were you
Not had enough time for yourself
Not had enough time for your family or other important people in your life
Not had enough energy for family activities
Unable to get everything done at home
Not in a good mood at home
because of your job? Would you say always, often, sometimes, rarely, or never?”
Table 1 lists and defines all independent variables. The Cronbach alpha value was more than 67% for all composite variables. The main independent variable of interest was shift. Additional independent variables of interest included job autonomy, family-friendly job culture, supervisory support, number of work hours per week, and a preference regarding the number of work hours per week. Control variables consisted of demographic (number of children under age six, gender, marital status, household income, age, and race/ethnicity) and work-related variables (education and occupation) likely to have an impact on NWFSp as suggested by the literature.

Analyses included t-tests for multiple comparisons of means, correlations, analyses of variance (ANOVAs), and a multiple regression on NWFSp. Two sets of analyses were run for the t-tests, one with all seven values of shift, the other with shift as a three-value variable. The latter combined all non-standard, non-flexible shifts into one value, leaving day and flexible as the other two shift values. The purpose of using all seven was to note distinctions among shifts. The purpose of using only three was to compensate for the small sample size of the individual non-standard shifts. SPSS Version 11 was the statistical software package used for the analyses.

Results

Hypothesis #1. Tables 2–3 are the results of ANOVAs on NWFSp by shift. There were significant differences in mean NWFSp by shift in the hypothesized direction. Table 2 demonstrates that people who worked one of the non-standard, non-flexible shifts had significantly higher mean negative spillover than those working day shifts. The day and the flexible shift workers did not differ significantly when compared to each other (Table 2). When the category containing all the non-standard, non-flexible shifts was compared to the flexible shift, the mean difference in spillover was also significant at .2256 (not shown in tables). Tables 2–3 support the hypothesis that shift workers experience greater NWFSp than employees who work standard hours. Table 5 shows the full multiple regression for NWFSp. As predicted, shift had a significant impact on spillover, even after controlling for demographic and work variables.
Table 1

Independent Regression Variables on Negative Work-to-Family Spillover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Composite Variable Breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shift</td>
<td>Day, Eve, Night, Rotating, Split, Flex, Other</td>
<td>Degree of freedom and decision-making on the job:</td>
<td>1) I have freedom to decide what I do on my job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Autonomy</td>
<td>Continuous composite. Based on mean value for 4 Likert scale variables.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2) I decide how my job gets done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range: 1 – 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3) I have a lot to say about what happens on my job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = low job autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td>4) There is an unwritten rule that you can’t care for family needs on company time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 = high autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td>2) You must choose between advancement and attention to family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Friendly</td>
<td>Continuous composite. Based on mean value for 4 Likert scale variables.</td>
<td>Degree to which workplace supports work-family issues.</td>
<td>3) Work/Family problems are workers’ problems, not the company’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Culture</td>
<td>Range 1 – 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>4) Putting family/personal needs ahead of the job is not viewed favorably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = low or no support for work-family needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 = high support for work-family needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Work Hrs/Week</td>
<td>Continuous Range 4–148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Composite Variable Breakdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference re # Work Hours</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Prefer same hours currently working</td>
<td>1) My supervisor keeps me informed of things I need to do my job well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fewer</td>
<td>Prefer fewer work hours</td>
<td>2) My supervisor has realistic expectations of my job performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Prefer more work hours</td>
<td>3) My supervisor recognizes when I do a good job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Support</td>
<td>Continuous composite. Based on mean value for 9 Likert-scale values: Range: 1-9</td>
<td>Degree to which supervisor supportive for job-related and family-related issues.</td>
<td>4) My supervisor is supportive when I have a work problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = low or no supervisory supportiveness 9 = high supervisory supportiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>5) My supervisor is fair when responding to personal &amp; family needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Professional/Managerial</td>
<td></td>
<td>6) My supervisor accommodates me when I have personal business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everyone else</td>
<td></td>
<td>7) My supervisor is understanding when I talk about personal/family issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8) I feel comfortable bringing up family issues w my supervisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9) My supervisor cares about work effects on family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1
Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Composite Variable Breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Treated as Continuous Range 1–9</td>
<td>Number of years of education:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1) less than a high school diploma or GED;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2) those with a diploma or GED;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3) those with trade or technical school education,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4) participants with some college;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5) a two-year associate degree;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6) those with a bachelor’s degree;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7) people with some college after a bachelor’s degree but no new degree;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8) those with a professional degree in medicine, law, or dentistry; and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9) respondents with a master’s or doctorate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children &lt; 6</td>
<td>Continuous Range 0–3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Men, Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Living w spouse/partner; Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Income</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>White, Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2
Multiple Comparisons (t-tests) of Negative Work-to-Family Spillover Means
Shift in 3 Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) SHIFT</th>
<th>(J) SHIFT</th>
<th>MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)</th>
<th>SIG</th>
<th>LOWER BOUND</th>
<th>UPPER BOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evening, night, rotating, split, other</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>.2334*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.1158</td>
<td>.3511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible—no set hours</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>7.879E-03</td>
<td>(NS).991</td>
<td>-.1407</td>
<td>.1564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I) SHIFT</td>
<td>(J) SHIFT</td>
<td>MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)</td>
<td>SIG</td>
<td>LOWER BOUND</td>
<td>UPPER BOUND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>7.663E-02</td>
<td>(NS) .962</td>
<td>-.1745</td>
<td>.3277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>.2421</td>
<td>(NS) .172</td>
<td>-4.7270E-02</td>
<td>.4756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotating—changes each day</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>.3210*</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>9.814E-02</td>
<td>.5439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split—2 distinct periods each workday</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>.3755</td>
<td>(NS) .228</td>
<td>-.1111</td>
<td>.8621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible—no set hours</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>7.879E-03</td>
<td>(NS) 1.000</td>
<td>-.1670</td>
<td>.1828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>.3014</td>
<td>(NS) .261</td>
<td>-.1022</td>
<td>.7050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T-tests treat one group as a control, and compare all other groups against it. *The mean difference is significant at the .001 level.
Hypothesis #2. Table 3 compares each shift to day shifts and shows that only people on rotating shifts differed significantly from day workers in mean NWFSp, with a mean difference of .321, only partially confirming hypothesis #2. Table 5 shows the full multiple regression for NWFSp, confirming the hypothesis for all except evening workers. People working night, rotating, and split shifts experienced significantly higher NWFSp than those working days. Rotating shift workers had the highest t values of any one shift type. However, evening shift workers did not differ significantly from day workers. People with flexible shifts also did not differ significantly from day workers. When the flexible group was the reference category and was compared to each non-standard shift, its NWFSp value was significantly lower than the NWFSp of shift workers (not shown). Shift remained significant in its impact on NWFSp even after adding demographic and work-related controls including education and occupation (Table 5).

Hypothesis #3. Table 4 demonstrates the strong, significant correlation between the number of work hours per week and increased NWFSp (r = .240, p = .000). The number of work hours per week did have a strong, positive, significant impact on NWFSp when controlling for demographic and work variables in the full multiple regression (Table 5, p = .000; t = 8.329).

Hypothesis #4. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the comparison of mean values of NWFSp among workers who preferred the same, fewer, or more work hours than their current schedule imposed (not shown in tables) demonstrated a strong, significant association between preference for fewer hours and increased NWFSp. People who preferred to work fewer hours had significantly higher mean values of NWFSp than those who liked their current schedules (p = .000; Mean difference = .5369). People who would have liked to work more hours did not differ significantly from those who preferred the same (p = .074). In the full regression (Table 5), preference to work fewer hours was significantly, positively associated (p = .000; t = 6.081) with increased NWFSp. Preferring more hours was not related significantly (p = .13) to NWFSp.

Hypothesis #5. Work variables other than shift, hours, or hours-preference, had significant associations with NWFSp: job autonomy, family-friendly job culture, and supervisory support.
Table 4

**Work and Demographic Variables Correlations to Negative Work-to-Family Spillover**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Work Hrs/Week</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.240**</td>
<td>2398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Autonomy</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.162**</td>
<td>2423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Friendly Job Culture</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.244**</td>
<td>2404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Support</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.285**</td>
<td>2155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NumChildren &lt; age 6</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.089**</td>
<td>2423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Income</td>
<td>.945 (NS)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.088**</td>
<td>2394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation significant at the .001 level (N's < 2,429 due to missing values)**

Families & Work Institute National Study of the Changing Workforce 1997 Data

Table 4 shows significant (p = .000) negative correlations between NWFSp and each of the three continuous variables job autonomy (-.162), a family-friendly job culture (-.244), and supervisory support (-.285). The t values in Table 5 indicate the strength of the associations. The family-friendlier the job culture, the lower the NWFSp (p = .000; t = -8.353). Similarly, the higher the degree of job autonomy, the lower the NWFSp (p = .003; t = -3.007). Supervisory support, a composite variable (Table 1) meaning that one’s supervisor was supportive concerning both job and family matters, was associated with a decrease in NWFSp (p = .000; t = -6.918). Note the $R^2$ showing that the model explains fully 22% of the variation (Table 5).

Discussion

**Shift Work, Hours of Work, and Negative Work-to-Family Spillover**

This study found that NWFSp was significantly higher for shift workers than for workers on either day or flexible schedules (Tables 2, 3, 5). When examining only mean spillover of each shift with no controls (Table 3), the rotating shift workers were the sole group differing significantly in mean NWFSp from day workers. When looking at the full regression, rotating shift workers had the highest t values (Table 5, t = 4.675). It is easy to imagine how
### Table 5

**Full Multiple Regression Model for Negative Work to Family Spillover**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Unstandard. B</th>
<th>Unstandard. Beta</th>
<th>Standard. Coeffs t</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>3.771</td>
<td>22.297</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shifts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>1.620E-02</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.169 (NS) .866</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>2.127 .034</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotating</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>4.675 .000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split</td>
<td>.400</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>2.233 .026</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible - No set hours</td>
<td>-2.796E-02</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>-.405 (NS) .686</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.307</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>1.927 .054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JOB AUTONOMY</strong></td>
<td>-8.773E-02</td>
<td>-.067</td>
<td>-3.007 .003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILY-FRIENDLY CULTURE</strong></td>
<td>-.238</td>
<td>-.191</td>
<td>-8.353 .000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># WORK HRS / WK</strong></td>
<td>1388E-02</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td>8.329 .000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preference re # Work Hours</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer fewer hours</td>
<td>.304</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>6.081 .000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer more hours</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>1.647 (NS) .13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPERVISORY SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td>-.245</td>
<td>-.161</td>
<td>-6.918 .000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION (# yrs of school)</strong></td>
<td>2.843E-02</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>2.735 .006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Summary ANOVA

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a rotating shift may wreak havoc on home or family life. Merely arranging child care becomes a nightmare if one needs child care at different hours each day. The number of work hours had a strong, significant impact on NWFSp (Table 5, p = .000; t = 8.329). Two of the factors composing the composite NWFSp variable were “Not had enough time for family” and “Not had enough energy for family activities.” Preferring to work fewer hours was a significant correlate to NWFSp.

**Control/Autonomy, Support, and Family-Friendliness**

The most interesting work variable examined apart from shift was job autonomy in that it was not conceptually tied to family themes and only involved job freedom and decision-making. Nevertheless, the data showed a strong negative relationship between job autonomy and NWFSp. This result is similar to findings of Karasek et al. (1981) who showed that jobs high in demand but low in control lead to poor individual health. The relationship between job autonomy and NWFSp in the current study may parallel Karasek’s research on autonomy and worker health.

A recent study by Barnett (1999) found that control over work hours has a mediating effect on the relationship between work hours and burnout. So a higher number of work hours does not correlate directly with an increased chance of burnout. Rather, people who have control over their schedules, whose desired number of work hours matches their actual work time, experience the lowest levels of burnout. The current study supported Barnett’s (1999) results if job autonomy serves as a proxy for control over hours. However, the study differs from Barnett’s (1999) in that number of work hours showed a strong positive association with NWFSp.
Job autonomy does not confine itself merely to control over work hours. As defined in the study (Table 1), autonomy primarily refers to decision-making concerning how to accomplish particular jobs and determining what those jobs should be. Clearly, the sense of providing input into the work process has a strong association with decreased NWFSp.

Supervisory support for both work issues and family concerns also appear to have a strong negative relationship with NWFSp. A workplace rated high in family-friendliness results in employees with significantly lower NWFSp.

Preference Concerning Number of Work Hours

Evidence exists showing that some Americans, given the option, will choose time over money (Cottle, 1997; Dowd, 1997). These “downshifters” are cutting back on their work commitment and in some cases quitting jobs altogether in order to enjoy families, communities, and other interests (Elgin, 1993). An estimate is that 4% of the 77 million “baby boomers,” ages 31–50, have begun living a simpler life so as not to have to earn as much money (Laabs, 1996).

The current study supported existing evidence. Most participants (62.9%) would prefer to work fewer hours. A preference for fewer hours was highly positively associated with NWFSp (Table 5; $p = .000; t = 6.081$). Number of work hours had a strong, significant positive correlation with NWFSp (Table 4; $p = .000; r = .24$) in contrast to household income, which did not.

Control and Demographic Variables

It was interesting to note that shift continued to show a significant association with NWFSp even when controlling for education and occupation (Table 5). Because so many shift jobs are blue-collar occupations (Deutsch, 1999), one might guess that increases in NWFSp associated with shift work could be the result of the type or nature of the job apart from its schedule. But the data within the current study suggest otherwise.

Occupation itself was not significant whether it was divided into two categories (Table 5) or seven (not shown). Education, however, demonstrated a significant association with NWFSp in that as education increased, so did NWFSp. This may be a
reflection of education accompanying higher expectations and subsequent disappointment with both jobs and families.

As expected, the number of children under six years old living at home had a significant, positive association with NWFSp. Again, consistent with literature (Hochschild & Machung, 1989), women and people living with spouses or partners experienced higher negative spillover than their male and single counterparts, respectively. Age was protective against high negative spillover, once more in agreement with studies showing that as families age, their stress level decreases (Cowan & Cowan, 1997). This may be a reflection of aging leading to lowered expectations or more experience and wisdom in reducing stress with families and other areas of life. But it could also be an indication that young children, often a source of stress, are not as likely to be living with older workers.

While household income had no relationship with NWFSp, surprisingly, race/ethnicity was associated significantly with NWFSp in an unexpected direction. Non-whites experienced lower NWFSp than whites. The same relationship held when the “All others” category was broken down into smaller ethnic groupings. This suggests that being non-white was a protective factor against negative spillover. One speculation as to the reason non-Hispanic whites had a level of negative spillover significantly higher than employees from other ethnic groups is a sample size issue. There was an overwhelming dominance of whites (78.7%) within this sample. But other issues may have played a role in this significant difference. It is possible that non-white workers report differently the same experiences when compared to whites. So, for example, a particular mood might be considered “bad” by whites and “normal” by non-whites. While many factors may be contributing to this particular variation, one reason may be that whites have higher expectations of work, family, and life than do people of color. This may be based on realistic assessments by both groups of the impact of racism on many aspects of life.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Employee Input into Decision-Making

Results from the study showing the strong associations between supervisory support, job autonomy, and a family-friendly
job culture to reduced NWFSp argue for attention on the part of employers and government to provide a work environment that includes autonomy and is family-friendly. Employers could develop ways to include workers in decision-making. The fact that it is possible to reduce NWFSp by increasing supervisory support suggests that supervisors be evaluated in part on their record of supportive behavior towards employees and that supervisory education include trainings on work-family relationships. Pressures to meet counteracting goals such as production quotas must be alleviated. The only strategy likely to be successful in instituting these changes in supervisory training and incentives is government mandates.

Substantiation exists for this claim as advocates for unpaid family and medical leaves know all too well. Until the Family and Medical Leave Act took effect in 1993, few employers provided workers with a guaranteed job after a 12-week leave for new parenthood or a serious illness of a family member. Studies conducted by Hewitt (1993), and Towers Perrin (1993) found 25% and 15% respectively, of employers surveyed offering family and medical leaves meeting FMLA requirements. Afterwards, while compliance was not 100%, the percentage of employers providing leaves increased dramatically to 67% (Commission on Leave, 1996).

Work Hours

Based on the strong association between number of work hours and NWFSp, the main policy implication is to decrease the number of work hours in a standard week. Although this may sound unrealistic to a U.S. audience, the equivalent is already taking place in European countries. France reduced the 40-hour workweek standard to 35 with no pay cuts in 2000. The main purpose in France is to decrease the unemployment rate (Dahlburg, 1999). However, there are clearly other benefits to this policy, such as being able to spend more time with one's family. In Denmark, half a million workers went on strike a few years ago to call for, among other demands, a 6-hour day for all shift workers (Pollitt, 1998). If the United States would share with its European counterparts the goal of facilitating the quality and quantity of time U.S. employees spend with families, it could develop its own family policy rather than merely pay lip service to so-called
"family values," with no corresponding legislation, as is currently the case.

Although probably not representing the U.S. mainstream viewpoint, several American scholars are calling for a reduced work schedule. Schor (1991) demonstrates how the number of work hours per year has increased by fully one month of work time for U.S. workers during the 50 years between 1940 and 1990. She advocates setting standard time limits for salaried workers so that employers would be obligated to pay them overtime for any hours worked beyond the limit, compensating overtime hours in time rather than money, and increasing hourly wages for workers previously earning wages at overtime rates (Schor, 1991). Jacobs and Gerson (1998), who refute Schor's claim of increased work hours, nevertheless also espouse a reduced work week standard from 40 to 35 hours and inclusion of exempt or salaried workers in the protection guaranteed by the Fair Labor Standards Act. They posit the idea that what has changed during the past 50 years is family structure, rather than job hours. Because there is no longer a person charged with family support work to maintain the male breadwinner, both men and women in the paid labor force need more free time than workers of previous generations. Bailyn (1993) makes the same point in her research. Other U.S. scholars, including Moen (1992), Haas (1992), and Hochschild (1997), to mention a few, point to European models to show that U.S. work-family arrangements are not the only ones imaginable. Moreover, it is possible to create a society in which people have time to spend with family and community while still performing well at jobs.

**Shift Scheduling**

The sizable differences in NWFSp for workers on flexible (t-test mean difference = .2256, p < .001) or day (t-test mean difference = .2334, p < .001, Table 2) shifts compared to workers on non-standard shifts is evidence that flexible work arrangements can substantially decrease NWFSp. At the same time, non-standard, non-flexible shift work tends to increase NWFSp. If, as consumers, we benefit from the labor of shift workers, from patronizing restaurants, shopping at all-night supermarkets, and participating in organized, recreational activities during non-
business hours, we must attempt to initiate policy that will sustain the family relationships of shift workers. Policy changes may involve reducing the number of people on shift work at any given time, offering options of shifts to workers, or limiting the number of months or years any one person would work a shift not of her/his choice.

Limitations, Future Research, and Conclusions

One limitation of the study was that only the workers were the participants. A much stronger design would have included the families of these workers. Then it would have been possible to obtain a fuller picture of negative work-to-family spillover. Consistencies and contradictions among family members' statements would contribute to a better understanding of the impact of shift work on the entire family.

It would be useful to do more research in the area of race/ethnicity and work-family conflict and spillover. Research that could verify or explain the results of this study which showed that NWFSp was higher for whites than non-whites could potentially lead to work-family policy that reduced spillover for people of all ethnicities.

The cross-sectional nature of the study was a limiting factor. For example, the survey asked participants only if they were doing shift work at the time of the interview. There was no information as to how long they had been working a given shift. However, those data could make a serious difference in interpreting results. Future research should include longitudinal studies in order to gain a more realistic understanding of the long-term impact of shift work on families.

This study has illustrated that there is a strong, significant relationship between shift work and NWFSp. Working non-standard, non-flexible shifts significantly increases NWFSp even when controlling for education, occupation, and standard demographic variables. Moreover, it has shown that job autonomy, a family-friendly job culture, supervisory support, and fewer work hours all significantly decrease NWFSp. Policy recommendations suggest a concern for protecting shift workers' family relationships. Time and again, social workers relate to clients as family mem-
bers, disenfranchised minorities, members of ethnic groups and of vulnerable populations, but not as workers most of them are. To ignore this major role that clients play is to abandon an important area of advocacy. Social workers must involve themselves in workers’ rights movements, labor unions, and living wage campaigns if they wish to offer genuine support to their clients. Social workers and social welfare policymakers are in key positions to advocate for the needs of the rapidly increasing group of shift workers in their overall agenda.

References


Because a Better World Is Possible: 
Women Casino Workers, Union Activism 
and the Creation of a Just Workplace

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University of Nevada, Reno 
School of Social Work

Based on a re-analysis of data from a qualitative study of the work experience of 36 women casino workers, this article examines the contributions and personal characteristics of the 13 women in the sample who described themselves as committed union activists. These women, all leaders in the Hotel Employees, Restaurant Employees Union, were proud that collectively they had improved wages, benefits, and the conditions of work in Nevada casinos, and had created an environment that reinforced pride in a job well-done, provided job security, and promoted strong families and communities. These women’s workplace experience serves as a reminder to the profession of the importance of collective power in the creation of a more just and humane world.

Keywords: women, work, women workers, casinos, unions, union organizing, union activism

Like I said, it’s a right-to-work state. They can let you go for anything, and they can make any kind of bogus thing up. You don’t ever know. . . . When you have a union hotel, you have protection in the union. You have shop stewards that will protect you, and they will fight for you. . . . It’s like having a public defender and a good lawyer.

Mary, cocktail waitress in a union casino

I think employees have a little more backbone [when] they’re protected by the contract and. . . . management has to go through procedures to fire them. [When] they can’t just walk up and say, “you’re fired” . . . or “I don’t

1 All names except where otherwise indicated are pseudonyms.

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like the way you look today" . . . or "you've put on too much weight." And that's the difference . . . at a union house you have a little bit more respect and dignity than you do at a non-union house.

Betty, cocktail waitress in a union casino

For a good part of its professional history, social work has had an uneasy relationship with work, particularly with the experience of workers in the workplace and with workplace organizing (Straussner & Phillips, 1988). Its interest in workplace issues has tended to be limited, relatively narrow, and often has centered on factors that inhibit a worker's job performance, like substance abuse (Goldmeier, 1994; Lawson, 1987; Madonia, 1985; Strauss, 1951). Employee assistance programs have been one of the profession's primary concerns, which is not surprising since clinical social workers have played a major role in providing EAP services (Bennett & Lehman, 1997; Heyman, 1971; Root, 1997). If social work's relationship with the workplace has been tenuous, its relationship with unions has been even more so (Straussner & Phillips, 1988). Social work's reticence in this area deserves a study in its own right and is beyond the scope of this article, but certainly the profession's close association with government bureaucracy, on the one hand, and corporate funders, on the other, is at issue, as is the profession's historic striving for professional status.

In the context of this general neglect, however, there have always been social work scholars and practitioners drawn to issues of class, workplace conditions, and union organizing. The profession's early history was characterized by deep commitment on the part of progressive social workers to workers and their struggles. For example, trade unions were a central feature of work at Hull House. Florence Kelley, a socialist, sophisticated international theorist and experienced trade union activist, energized the Hull House collective upon her arrival in 1891 with her commitment to the working class. She investigated sweatshops, inspected factories, and founded the National Consumers League, which advocated for a minimum wage and a limitation on the working hours of women and children. In 1903, with Jane Addams, Mary Kenney, Mary McDowell, and Sophonisba Breckinridge, Kelley established the Chicago Women's Trade Union
Union Activism

League, whose main objectives were to educate women about the advantages of trade union membership and support women's demands for better working conditions. Meetings of the WTUL and other unions were often held at Hull House and members of the settlement helped support workers during industrial disputes (Sklar, 1995). Mary Van Kleeck, E. Franklin Frazier, Bertha Capen Reynolds, and members of the Rank and File Movement were other social workers who cast their lot with workers and workplace organizing.

In recent years, a number of social work scholars have carried on this tradition by exploring workplace issues like unemployment (Briar, 1980; Karger, 1988; Reisch & Gorin, 2001; Sharraden, 1985); occupational health and workplace hazards (Dawson, 1993; Dawson, Charley & Harrison, 1997; Lewis, 1997; Mor-Borak & Tynan, 1993; Root, 1997); environmental racism in the workplace (Dawson & Madsen, 1995; Hoff & McNutt, 1994; Hoff & Rogge, 1996; Rogge, 1996; Silver, 1992); the impact of layoffs, de-industrialization, and globalization (Jones & Chandler, 2001; Reisch & Gambrill, 1997; Reisch & Gorin, 2001; Rocha, 2001; Rose, 1997; Zippay, 2001), and the situation of particular groups of workers (Chandler & Jones, 2003; Gringeri, 2001; Jones & Chandler, 2001; Whitebook, 1999). Welfare reform has generated increased interest in work as well, as women receiving public assistance are thrust into the low-wage labor market (Cancian & Meyer, 2000; Dinerman & Faulkner, 2000; Gooden, 2000; Piven, Acker, Hallock, and Morgen, 2002). The profession's growing interest in workers mirrors a general resurgence in working class and labor studies in the last decade and a half. The growth of inequality worldwide has prompted progressive researchers both in and out of the academy to produce a wealth of studies and theoretical analyses of workers, wages, class, and unions (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000; Chang, 2000; Ehrenreich, 2001; Figart, Murtari & Power, 2002; Heymann, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Johnson, 2002; Kazis & Miller, 2001; Louie, 2001; Mishel, Bernstein, & Schmitt, 2001; Mort, 1998; Nelson & Smith, 1999; Rosen, 2002; Teixeira & Rogers, 2000; Zweig, 2000.)

For the last four years, we have been studying the work experience of women casino workers in Nevada and its effect on the women, their families and their communities. In this paper we
focus on those 13 women in the 36-member sample who identified themselves as committed union activists. In their interviews, these maids, waitresses, laundry workers, and cooks told story after story of significantly and concretely changing workplace conditions through their work with the Hotel Employees, Restaurant Employees Union (H.E.R.E.), a union that has distinguished itself by its emphasis on grassroots, member-to-member organizing. The women not only had a strong sense of themselves as activists but also as makers of history, and felt their own lives, joined with others, were contributing to the struggle to make a better world possible. In this they embodied Paolo Freire’s idea of conscientization, that is, they had become "Subjects who [act] upon and transform [their] world, and in so doing [move] toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer [lives] individually and collectively (Freire, 1998, p. 14). We also found that the union activists shared a set of personal characteristics (belief in the dignity of work, commitment to co-workers, and dedication to justice) that was apparent in all aspects of their lives.

Our encounters with the union activists were deeply affecting. In every case, we left the interviews feeling that amid the casino glitter, we had been graced by connection with some of the strongest and most inspiring women in our state. The connections have survived, and in several cases become friendships. In that way, we are not objective about the causes for which these women struggle. We believe they carry hope for a better life for working people in Nevada, and whenever possible we join with them. We feel, too, that their lives and collective struggles hold important lessons for social work as it strives to make an impact in a globalized world. The profession has tended to distance itself from collective struggles in general and union activities in particular. These women’s lives—and more, their success in building genuine power—offer a reason to re-think that position.

The Study

This article is based on a re-analysis of data from a qualitative study, still in progress, in which we are investigating the work experience of women casino workers and its effect on their families and communities (Jones & Chandler, 2001). In the larger
study, we have interviewed 36 women casino workers. We have also conducted four focus groups (with social workers, Latino leaders, teachers, and health professionals, all of whom have had contact with women casino workers and their families) and over forty interviews with key-informants (economists, demographers, labor union officials, and other persons with expertise in this area).

The women we interviewed were referred to us or identified through a snowball sampling technique. The interviews, lasting from one to four hours, were guided by open-ended questions that centered on the women’s casino work experience, the nature of their work, and the work’s effect on families and communities. We audio-taped the interviews in their entirety and later transcribed them for analysis. We also collected demographic information.

Our re-analysis of the data for this paper was guided by an adaptation of grounded theory, an inductive analytical method that allows the data to speak for itself (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We began the analytical process by identifying primary themes in each interview. Then, using a process of constant comparative analysis, we refined final themes across the sample by comparing the themes in individual interviews to those in other interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Part of our commitment as feminist researchers was to let women “speak their own lives.” We have learned the benefits of this approach from oral historians who with great patience listen to the fullness of their subjects’ stories. We worried that limiting subjects’ participation in this paper to a string of brief quotations would reduce the richness of the women’s lives, and worse, that a kind of flatness would creep into their accounts. Thus, we chose to use longer quotations and to include a “paradigm case,” that is, one woman’s story that reflects themes present in all the interviews.

A limitation of the study is the small size of sample. However, consistent with the principles of qualitative research, a small sample facilitates the collection of “thick description,” that is rich and full-bodied data (Geertz, 1989). The sample was also self-selected. The findings therefore cannot be generalized to other populations.
We have discussed the nature of casino work elsewhere (Jones & Chandler, 2001), but it bears repeating—casino work is very hard work. Not one woman we interviewed said otherwise. On the contrary, they described their work as physically demanding, fast-paced, and injurious to their health. Wages, except on the highly organized Las Vegas strip, are extraordinarily low. One woman described Reno as a "two-job town," meaning that workers must work two jobs to survive.

Two further notes are in order. First, there are enormous differences between Reno and Las Vegas. H.E.R.E. represents workers in both locations, but in Reno only about 1200 workers in two properties are organized. On the other hand, Las Vegas Local 226 (or the Culinary Union, as H.E.R.E. is called there) with 50,000 members is the largest local in the country. Second, H.E.R.E. is part of the "new union movement," which is characterized by grassroots, member-to-member organizing, community coalitions, and the development of a leadership cadre among workers of color, immigrants, women, and employees in service industries (Mort, 1998; Moberg 2001). Local 226 has emerged as a standard-bearer of that movement (Moberg, 2001). The victorious six-year Frontier Strike galvanized union members in Las Vegas and brought thousands of supporters from across the United States to march in solidarity with the strikers (HEREIU, 1999b). The consciousness and leadership that was built in that and other strikes are palpable among Las Vegas union members who are keenly aware of their power and potential.

Findings: Personal Characteristics of Union Activists

The thirteen women union activists, three of whom worked in Las Vegas and ten in Reno, were quite diverse in age, marital status, race, and country of origin (see Table 1). Given this diversity, we were surprised to discover how much they had in common. Three personal characteristics stood out in the analysis: a belief in the dignity of work, commitment to helpful and rich relationships with co-workers, and a commitment to justice.

All of the women had a strong work ethic and believed in the
value of work and a job well done. Dorothy, a maid, discussed her attitude toward work:

> You know, with Greta [her work partner] and I, we wanted our rooms to look really good. 'Cause it's like your home. You want it to look good, too. That was our job, and we wanted to do it really good. . . . My mom taught [me] . . . to do a job good.

Liza, an immigrant from Mexico with 19 years experience, talked about her experience working at the espresso bar:

> Espresso is a very busy place, especially Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. And they schedule—two people! To me that is careless of the customers,
because the customers are the ones who's going to pay for not putting more people in there. . . . I can work, and I like it. You know, I like running. I like doing things fast and make comfortable all the customers because that's what it is all about. To get a very satisfied customer.

Liza felt that it was the workers, not the management, who were the experts and knew best how to please the customer.

All the women spoke of the importance of their relationships with co-workers. Listening to their stories, it soon became apparent that there was a connection between workplace relationships and job satisfaction. These relationships made difficult work conditions tolerable. Dorothy, for example, described her work as two-sided, both hard and enjoyable, but it was clearly her work-based friendships that helped make it the latter.

So they raised the rooms to fifteen, so we'd have thirty rooms we'd do together. Yeah, it was fun. It was horrible. We'd have to hurry so fast. . . . Our faces would be all red. But you know, I've worked there so long I feel . . . like the people there are my family. . . . I've grown up with these people.

Another characteristic reflected in all the women's stories was a well-developed sense of justice. Nicolasa de la Puente (her real name), a cook and president of Reno's Local 86, described her every-day experience standing on the side of justice:

I love doing this work. I know that it is the right thing to do. I want to be able to help, and change all these families where the father doesn't have to work two jobs. Where the mother can stay longer at home raising those kids and have a happy family. . . . You do it for other people. You do it for the things you believe. You do it for doing the right thing.

Findings: Using Collective Power to Change Workplaces

In analyzing the interviews, we were repeatedly struck by the pride the 13 union activists took in improvements they collectively had brought about in their workplaces. We noted further that these successes had given the women great confidence in their ability—when united—to be actors in the workplace and community. Geoconda Kline (her real name), a former maid and immigrant from Nicaragua, recently elected president of Local 226, described collective power:
Union Activism

When I start to organize, it was an incredible experience for me because I start to believe in the power. . . . [It was like for me this fist. We got the power. The companies can't have everything. . . . I really found this is the truth. You never knew your power and the power your co-workers can have together. If we get together, we can move companies.

The collective power Geo describes needs to be differentiated from empowerment, a concept with which social work is more familiar. "Empowering" a single mother, for example, is a practice strategy that social workers readily embrace. All too often, however, social workers' vision stops at the individual level and ignores the challenge of building the collective power necessary to change the conditions of life.

As for the difference that union makes in a workplace, the women we interviewed were absolutely clear about that. Margaret, a Reno cocktail waitress, said it this way, "When you go from . . . a non-union house to a union house, the difference is night and day." Union, according to the women, means higher wages, better benefits, job security; dignity on the job, a reduction in discriminatory practices, the creation of a leadership cadre within the casino, and better service for the customers.

Hourly wages are at the core of working people's well-being, and here the women felt that union was key. We did not meet a single worker who was not aware of the difference in wages between Las Vegas and Reno, and that the difference was the result of the Culinary Union. In Las Vegas, housekeepers on the Strip start at $14.00 an hour. In Reno—despite the fact that most of the casinos are owned by the same gaming corporations that pay workers decently in Las Vegas—non-union housekeepers begin at $6.50 an hour. H.E.R.E. is not as strong in Reno, but even in Reno, there is a significant difference between union and non-union casinos. Union housekeepers in Reno start at $8.50 and with ten years of seniority can make as much as $13.00 an hour.

The women felt that unionization meant a significant different in benefits as well. In Las Vegas we were often told that the union's health plan, which covers spouses, same-sex domestic partners, and families at no cost, is one of the best in the nation (HEREIU, 1999a). Union leaders know the health plan is key to workers' security, in some ways more important than wages. In Reno, non-
union casino workers generally pay $30 a month for their own coverage and $100–130 for family coverage, sums that low-wage workers simply cannot afford. It is the main reason why Nevada leads the nation in the rate of non-insurance (Chandler, 2002).

The women explained that job security is greatly enhanced in a unionized property. Nevada is a right to work state, or, as workers joke, "a right-to-get-fired state!". Workers' jobs in non-union casinos are truly insecure, and stories abound in the interviews of willful firings about which employees could do nothing. It's no surprise, then, that the increased job security that the union contract brought was enormously appreciated. Two Reno women, a cook and a maid, commented:

Nicolasa de la Puente (her real name): [This union house] has been the best [place I've worked in the last 25, 30 years], because I don't have to worry about I'm going to go to work and my boss doesn't like me today, and he'll fire me. They can fire you for no reason everywhere else. Comb your hair in a different way and they don't like it—[you're fired].

Dorothy: [A union makes] a lot of difference. [Before] they treated us like workhorses. [Now there's] job security. They're careful about who they fire.

Dignity on the job was also critically important to union activists who were adept at using the contract to stop abusive treatment of employees by management. For women who had seen a great deal of unfairness, this made a huge difference. As Margaret, the cocktail waitress, said,

I was a shop steward for 12 years . . . and think the reason I enjoyed [being in the union] so much . . . was because you can make changes . . . You can speak for people who can't speak for themselves. It's more just like helping.

The activists, who knew the contract backwards and forwards, spent a good deal of time educating workers about their rights and "re-training" supervisors. Quoting Margaret again:

A lot of times [the supervisors] will try and pull stuff . . . and we have to retrain them a little bit. Eventually they have to give in. I mean you can file so many grievances against them, and pretty soon the food and beverage director gets tired of it, and [says to the supervisor], "When are you going to learn? Here's the contract. Read it. Follow it." I had one supervisor that started yelling at me in the break room, and I just turned around and told him, "I'm on break. If you have anything to say to me, you can take me to your office and say it in a professional manner or else quit wasting my
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And I walked out and left him standing there. . . . Actually, he came up and apologized to me later. They can't get away with treating me like crap like they can at [non-union houses] because you have a recourse. . . . [The supervisors] kick and scream, but eventually they [come around]. You have to bring them down to being more human. They want to be, "I'm king up here," but they end up having to give up a lot of power.

The union contract, the women pointed out, also mitigated the problems of discrimination against women, older workers, minority workers, and workers whose first language is not English. Knowing that there were contract rules to be followed and an effective grievance procedure improved relations among all groups, and the women activists commented on it regularly. In one example, a Reno cocktail waitress told us with considerable pride about a 65 year-old woman who was still working as a cocktail waitress: "[At a nonunion house] she'd be gone. Yeah, you don't see anybody over 35 cocktailing at a nonunion casino."

The women also felt that the union contract dramatically improves relationships among the workers. The reason, according to them, was simple: a union contract guarantees that if a worker does her job, she will be able to keep it as long as she wants. A Reno cocktail waitress explained: "You're there longer [so] you can build your friendships. At the other place the turnover was constant. But here, gosh, I've known these girls for 15 years."

Finally, it was clear in the interviews that unions and union organizing create a leadership cadre that is at the core of a just workplace environment. Leadership development is a central organizing concept of the new union movement, and is something that all the women union activists understood. Rank and file leaders facilitate communication, are key to educating members about issues, handle grievances, set an example of discipline and positive relationships, and encourage workers to "keep on keeping on". Without them, nothing would happen.

The women we interviewed were grateful to their own teachers—the union organizers who had preceded them—and were eager to pass the lessons on. Most important, they liked the new sense of themselves. "I've gotten a lot stronger," a Reno maid said.

I used to be really shy and stuff, [and] I'm still a little bit, but not so bad. I was really scared of people. . . . Working with the union, that's really
helped me a lot. Going to the marches and all the rallies. . . . I was scared, but I did it anyway. . . . The first time . . . a group of us [went] to one of the bosses, I was one of the spokespersons. I was shaking, you know! (laughter) I was literally scared to death, but I did it anyway. It was really hard, but it was really worth it, and it's helped me a lot. It has made me stronger in my whole life. I stood up to my husband and I couldn't do that [before].

The women knew how important it was to build leaders, and for most that took the form of building "committees," the groups of workers who are the union's core organizing teams. Alma, a former maid who now works for the union, spoke proudly about a committee member she helped develop:

One of my committee [members], her name is Helen, she says, "I have changed so much, Alma. I have learned so much. . . . I'm not scared to go to management." But besides that, as a woman she has changed and she knows this. [For me] that's a great feeling. That's my prize. That's my pay. . . . [I]t's such a nice feeling. 'Cause what she's learning . . . she's passing that to her co-workers. She's a leader. And now she's telling her co-workers . . . And that's like a ladder, you know?

The women had a strong sense of themselves as activists, as makers of history and this awareness extended beyond themselves and their own families to global realities and to the coming generations. They had developed philosophies that sustained them for the long fight. Nicolasa de la Puente spoke of her own leadership and commitment:

See, the way that the union grows is by leaders. So if we are being called the leaders, we have to lead our co-workers. [You] always have to explain to them why we're doing it and how we're going to do it, and how we're protected. If you don't go through all that, people are not going to do anything. You show the workers that you're strong and you're going to show the company that you're strong, but you cannot do it alone. You have to have the workforce to back you up. If you say you're going to do something and you don't do it, you lose credibility. I always said that once you're a leader, you have to be a leader, and you cannot back down, because then you're nothing.

Complicating Factors, or Why Life Still Trips Us Up

As positive a force as union activism was in the women's lives, it was not without its difficulties. First, organizing, especially the kind that requires off-hours home-visits, is an enormous amount
of work and takes time away from family and children. This was hard on the women, many of whom were single mothers. Their principal strategy for staying connected with their children and spouses was involving them in union activities. Alma and Geoconda Kline, two full-time union organizers, were among the many women who spoke about these issues:

Alma: Honestly, [my kids] are with me a hundred percent. They understand . . . this is not a regular job. This is a movement, and you work hours. Next weekend, no day off because you have to do it. If you start working here at the union, you . . . have to give yourself a hundred percent. Or don’t be here. So my kids, they understand. We don’t see them that much, so the little time that I spend with them, it’s like quality time. But they do understand. And they learn. They’re the future leaders.

Geoconda: My daughter . . . she grew up on the picket line. . . . They grow up with the movement. They know it’s something important. . . . When we have something they can participate, we bring them. It’s good they get involved. Because the more they get involved, the more they understand, the more they can see how important it is for them to have a union, too.

Other women, like Rosa, a waitress who had worked for the union in Reno, felt the contradiction more keenly:

[It] was a big struggle to find a balance in between work and family. Family is yours, 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Then with work for the union, it is like you belong to them. . . . Say today’s Sunday. I don’t care if it’s your son’s birthday or you decide to take a vacation, because we have to do this and that. That was very tough.

Long hours are the reality of any kind of activism, of course. Still, the ideal of the union organizer as a single man, available at all hours of the day any day of the week, is a male model that unions have to think about if they wish to recruit women to their ranks and retain them.

A second problem was burn-out. The truth is in long struggles people get tired. The main way that the women expressed burn-out, it seemed to us, was in frustration about their fellow workers. This was more a reality in Reno than in Las Vegas. Union women in Las Vegas had worked incredibly hard, but they had come away with victories. Las Vegas is now one of the most organized cities in the West, and the six-year strike at the Frontier casino
ended in victory. In Reno, with only 1200 union members and victories few and far between, burn-out was more of a problem. Women did not in general criticize the idea of unionization, to which they remained committed, but they had a lot to say about workers who wanted the hard-won benefits yet refused to join the struggle. Three Reno activists talked about burn-out:

Dorothy: I'm just tired of fighting for everyone. I'm getting so disgusted. Shoot, you just fight so hard for them and they still don't want to stand up.

Liza: I hate when somebody comes up to me with, 'How's the union?' I get so upset because I think the union is YOU. You are the union. We are the union. Nobody else is going to come over here and help you if you don't help yourself.

Dolores: People's spirits get really down. Because they say, how many years? And nothing happening. I say, 'Do you know why it's not happening? Because you're not involved. If you were involved, you will get this right now.'

But in the end they all still believed in union. There was no doubt about that.

A Paradigm Case

In this section we present a "paradigm case" that will, we think, provide readers with a fuller sense of these union activists. We selected Peggy Pierce (her real name) whose story embodies the primary themes that emerged in the analysis particularly well.

We met Peggy at a noisy Starbucks just off the Las Vegas strip on a sunny winter afternoon. Peggy is a small, wiry, and delightful woman who came to Las Vegas thirteen years ago to break into show business. To support herself on her way to the top, she got a union job serving food at the Desert Inn. It didn't work out quite like she'd planned. "I discovered after about three years that I was really terrible at show business," she laughed.

I had horrible stage fright. . . . you know, show business is brutal. You have to be able to get out of bed every morning and tell every single person you meet that you are the most talented person that's ever lived. You have to be relentless! You have to start every conversation with it. It took all the self-confidence I had to tell one person a week that I was very talented.
Peggy worked at the Desert Inn for twelve years, and like many workers we interviewed, when she looked around, her temporary casino job had become her life. She’d busted in show business, but had a house, a pension, a good hourly wage, and a union.

She’d also developed an entire family of co-workers at the Desert Inn. “The Desert Inn was one of the last really small hotels on the Strip,” she said. “And it was a wonderful experience.”

I mean the night before the Desert Inn closed [in 1999], I stood there at the casino and I couldn’t get myself to walk out. That whole experience—of working a very long time in one place—is really fading from America. And the truth is—it’s a cliché, but you really are like a family. You know people when their children are born. You hear about their kids when they graduate from high school. You’re there when they get married, when their first grandchildren come.

Peggy and her co-workers took a great deal of pride in their work and in the Desert Inn itself: “I was a shop steward and it seemed like I fought constantly with management. [Still,] it was as good as work can be. The co-workers were terrific. And you know, we were all very proud of the place. It had a great reputation.”

Peggy felt that workers’ pride in the Desert Inn had everything to do with being union. It enabled her and other shop stewards to insist on workplace fairness and dignity, which in her mind stood at the root of customer service. Management, she said, had a hard time with that concept:

One of the things we say in the union is, ‘nothing organizes workers as much as a bad boss.’ And we got a doozie. I mean this guy was a piece of work. He thought he was going to run this room on the basis of juice. And it wasn’t going to happen. Because I wasn’t going to do the juice thing. I wasn’t going to cozy up to him, and I was not going to get screwed out of every good order. So I started filing grievances. A lot of them.

“If a room’s run on juice,” Peggy explained, “it’s run on favoritism and favors. It breaks every rule in the union contract—and it also poisons the atmosphere.”

Nobody trusts each other. . . . Everybody’s looking over their shoulder. . . . It’s a terrible atmosphere to work in. I think that it absolutely does not serve the industry. The bosses don’t feel that strongly about it because they
don't understand how bad it gets. I also think that a lot of time the bosses
don't understand how well a room can work when everyone knows they're
going to be treated fairly. . . . You can actually create teamwork. When I
was a captain, which gave me a lot of control over the room, everybody
on my shift absolutely knew all the time that everything was going to go
by the book, and people relaxed. They always knew they weren't going to
get ripped off. It makes it completely different. I also think that it makes it
possible . . . to serve the guests better. I wish we could convince the hotels
of that. . . .

Peggy had a well-developed sense of social justice which she
said she'd gotten from her parents who were active in the civil
rights movement: "I grew up surrounded by . . . a sense that there
is injustice in the world, and that's not right. That's something that
you should . . . do something about. That's part of what being a
decent person is about." She went on, "I can pretty much take
care of myself on any job . . . ."

But in a non-union place, even if you can take care of yourself . . . all
around you there are people being taken advantage of . . . some because they
don't have the personality to take care of themselves or they don't have the
intellectual ability or they don't have the language ability or they're getting
picked on just because they're people of color. In a non-union place, I was
often trying to fight for these people who couldn't speak up for themselves.
But once I was in a union place, I had protection. I didn't have to worry
about whether or not speaking up for someone else was going to affect my
job. I could just speak up and say, "This isn't right." [In a union place] you
always know that if you do your job, [you can keep it]. You don't have
to be friends with the boss. The boss doesn't have to like you or like what
you look like, or any of that kind of stuff.

Peggy also spoke of her growing insider's awareness of the
importance of what Culinary was doing in Las Vegas:

I'm very, very proud of being a member of Local 226. I became aware about
ten years ago, if you wanted to learn about unions, you had to come to my
union in Las Vegas because we were trailblazers. My leadership was doing
things that no one had done before or they hadn't done in 30, 40 years. And
a big part of that is organizing. We don't sit still. As gaming gets bigger,
we have to get bigger, so that we can maintain the power that we have and
hopefully increase it.

We talked with Peggy just a month and a half after September
11th which had hit the Culinary Union very hard. One hundred
forty H.E.R.E. members died in the World Trade Center. In Las Vegas, Peggy said, the effects of September 11th were immediate. “About 15,000 people got laid off on the Strip. All of the expansion plans came to a sudden stop, so all the construction workers got laid off. Cab drivers took a huge hit, and then there’s just this ripple effect.”

Peggy described Culinary’s direct approach to laid-off Las Vegas workers’ needs with pride. “The community got together, and the union proposed a Helping Hand Center,” she said.

In Nevada all unemployment is done by telephone, and the whole system was immediately overwhelmed. I mean, people sat on the phone for hours and hours and couldn’t get through. And the thing is that the longer that you don’t get through, the farther your unemployment check recedes in front of you. You’ve got to get through to them to get any money. So we erected a huge tent out in the parking lot [of the union], and opened a rapid response center. We had an actual unemployment office there. Clark County Social Services came in and set up an office. The Welfare Department . . . and Nevada Power came in. United Way set up a displaced workers fund . . . targeted at rental assistance. We pulled this whole thing together in, like, a week. I can’t believe we managed to do it. The day before I thought, ‘we’re not going to make it.’ But the next morning we got here at 7 o’clock and there were about 50, 60 people in line and they had been there since 4:00. Over the next three weeks, 7,000 people came through the tent.

The big news in Peggy’s life when we talked with her in November 2001 was that she had decided to run for the Nevada State Assembly. “My decision to run for office has everything to do with being a union member,” she explained:

My union is very politically active. We have for a number of years been involved in elections. Our contract has a clause that says that the union can request a member to come out on a leave of absence from the hotel and work at the union for up to six months in a year. I have come out maybe seven or eight times for political campaigns, and I’ve done the precinct walking. You know, we know how to get people elected. We’re relentless. We do a get-out-the-vote that’s tremendous. Right up until ten minutes before the polls close, we’re dragging people out of their houses, saying, “You didn’t vote yet! You’ve got seven minutes, and I don’t care if you’re wearing fuzzy slippers. Let’s go.”
But, she said, the officials that Culinary gets elected “sometimes forget us.” So the union began to talk about wanting to run its own people. “About five years ago, Glen Arnodo, the political director of Culinary, asked at a big meeting of shop stewards who would like to run for office,” Peggy said. About twenty people raised their hands, and Peggy was one of them.

I’ll probably be sorry for saying this, but you know the truth is there’s only two things that I ever wanted to do, that I ever wanted to be. I wanted to be Frank Sinatra or a senator.” I blew it being Frank Sinatra. So now it’s on to being a senator.

A year later Peggy Pierce was elected State Assemblywoman from District 3 in Las Vegas. Her victory, won by the relentless work of Culinary members, was a bright spot amid the gloom that followed the 2002 elections.

We ended the interview by asking Peggy, “You’ve been active a long time. Do you ever get discouraged?” “No,” she replied, and her answer gave us, too, a reason to keep fighting.

I look at everything as a ten-year battle. You know, one group that is always there, never gives up, never loses sight, are the Quakers. They have been fighting poverty and injustice for a couple hundred years. Their people don’t get tired. They don’t burn out, and I . . . believe that the reason for that is a spiritual basis for the fight. I have a spiritual basis for the fight. I believe in what I’m doing. I’m comfortable with a certain amount of mystery in the process. . . . If I don’t win today’s battle, it’s because in some way it’s supposed to happen in some other way. So I can say at the end of sort of losing a battle, ‘Well, you know, the creative force in the universe thought . . . that wasn’t the plan.’

I’m also a history buff, and I can absolutely see that we make progress over hundreds of years. I mean there really was a time in this world when nobody questioned whether or not slavery was a good idea. Everybody did it. And then, you know, a couple of hundred years ago, the Quakers and some other people, started to think, “Well, this is not just.” And today there are pockets of the world with slavery, but nobody believes that it’s just. Everybody knows it’s evil.

So I can look at history and say that we are evolving into a more just world. I know that it doesn’t look so good today, but over a hundred years it does change tremendously. But it changes because millions of people make a decision to make a difference, to think differently, to demand justice, to
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demand justice for other people, to not look the other way, and I just need to be a part of that.

Conclusion

"Because a better world is possible" is the core belief that motivates, structures, and inspires the political activism of the current anti-globalization movement. It also shapes the activism of the women who are the focus of this paper. They, too, hold fast to the hope of a more just and humane world. Their work is centered on improving the conditions of the workplace and in the struggle to raise wages, improve benefits, create an environment that reinforces pride in a job well-done, fosters respectful and cooperative relationships with co-workers, provides job security, and promotes strong families and communities. In this they mirror the vision of the anti-globalization movement.

The stories of Peggy Pierce and the other women presented in this paper carry important implications for social workers. Primary among them is the lesson of building collective power that can change workplaces and sometimes the broader world as well. Social work, in this historical period, can and should be part of the reinvigoration of unions and the creation of a more just and humane workplace. Researchers, practitioners, educators, and students can all contribute their expertise to building a movement that addresses the needs of workers both in the United States and internationally. It is and historically has been a vital part of social work's mission.

References


Resiliency Factors Related to Substance Use/Resistance: Perceptions of Native Adolescents of the Southwest

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This exploratory, qualitative study examined risk and protective factors influencing drug and alcohol use and/or resistance of Native youth in the Southwest. Thirty-two Native middle school students participated in 10 focus groups that explored their experiences with alcohol and drugs in their school and reservation communities. The findings indicate a complex interaction of both risk and protective factors related to substance use. Respondents’ cousins and siblings, in particular, played a key role in their decisions to use or resist drugs. Implications for social work practice are discussed.

Keywords: Native, Indigenous, youth, substance use, family

Grounded in resiliency theory (Waller, 2002), this exploratory, qualitative study examined the operative risk and protective factors influencing drug and alcohol use and/or resistance of urban Native seventh graders in the Southwest. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of cultural context on drug use/resistance among Native youth as reflected through their narratives. Particular attention was given to the way in which respondents conceptualized and experienced “family.” In this

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paper, the terms Native, First Nations, and Indigenous are used interchangeably, as contemporary Native scholars prefer them to the linguistic colonialism implied in the terms Indians, American Indians, and Native Americans.

Historical Context of Native Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA)

The usefulness of research on substance abuse among Indigenous youth is limited when data are decontextualized. Analyses that present quantitative data independent of context may identify problems but present an incomplete picture of these problems and how Indigenous people experience and respond to them (Weaver, 1999). Many researchers have attributed alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA), family violence, and other manifestations of psychosocial distress among Native people to deficits, euphemistically termed cultural or genetic “differences” between Native and non-Native people. Suggested cultural determinants include lax moral codes (Holmes & Antell, 2001) and loss of traditional cultural values and norms (Caetano, Clark, & Tam, 1998). In addition, for many years, researchers believed that Native people had a genetic predisposition to alcoholism. However, repeated clinical studies have demonstrated that no such genetic predisposition exists (Bennion & Li, 1976; Chan, 1986; May, 1994).

By contrast, a growing number of researchers maintain that contemporary social problems can only be understood in the context of historical trauma related to colonization. European colonizers, by means of force or deception, have destroyed or appropriated Native people’s lives, lands, resources, wealth, cultures, and languages, and have repeatedly violated treaties, and both sovereign and civil rights. Contemporary researchers are examining the relationship between historical trauma related to these human rights abuses and contemporary social problems such as substance abuse and its sequelae in Native communities (Frank, Moore, & Ames, 2000; Beauvais, 1998).

Finally, institutionalized oppression of Native people is not just a historical artifact—it persists in contemporary life. Examples include federally-run, Eurocentric Indian health care, education, social service, and criminal justice systems that have always been and continue to be underfunded and poorly administered,
resulting in culturally inappropriate and substandard services. Poverty, geographic isolation, and lack of access to needed resources further restrict the range of opportunities available to Native youth (Schaefer, 2000).

**The Impact of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (ADOA) on Native Youth**

ADOA is a powerful risk factor impacting the psychosocial well being of Native youth (Ehlers, Wall, Garcia-Andrade, & Phillips, 2001). One intertribal study of 1464 Native high school adolescents found that forty percent of them had used marijuana at least once a month (Novins & Mitchell, 1998). Novins and Mitchell also found that marijuana use was associated with the use of other illicit substances, antisocial behavior, and lower grades in school. Native youth drink alcohol at earlier ages than non-Native youth, consume greater quantities, and suffer higher levels of negative drinking-related consequences (Beauvais, 1996). In fact, compared to other ethnic groups, some research indicates that Native youth have higher overall rates of gateway drug use (see Kulis, Napoli, & Marsiglia, 2002, for review).

The prevalence of substance use among Native youth is related to the fact that Native families have higher rates of ADOA than families of any other ethnic group in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). Accordingly, many Native adolescents live in families experiencing ADOA and its traumatic sequelae, including family violence, mental health problems, accidents, homicides, suicides, illnesses, and child abuse and neglect (Bachman & Peralta, 2002; Hamby, 2000; Wall, Garcia-Andrade, Wong, Lau, & Ehlers, 2000). For example, the rates of suicide and homicide are 39 percent higher for Native people than for other groups combined, and ninety percent of these deaths are alcohol related (Bachman, 1992).

These social problems impact many Native youth, not as statistics, but rather as searing personal experience. Because of the prevalence of ADOA in Native families, Native youth typically learn ADOA behaviors not only from peers, as is most often the case in the dominant culture, but also from parents, elder siblings and cousins, and other relatives.
"Family" Defined

Among Native people, "family" is typically defined as a complex web of relationships that includes relations by blood, clan, tribe, and formal and informal adoption. Accordingly, in many Native families, the distinction between "immediate" and "extended" family does not pertain. In many Indigenous languages, for example, there are no terms for "extended family" such as niece, nephew, or cousin. Instead, cousins and other children in the extended family/clan are perceived in the same way that the dominant culture views members of the "immediate" family (Cross, 1986). Further, in some Native communities, the distinction between actual and ascribed filial relationships is blurred (C. Lujan, personal communication, February 24, 2003). In effect, a cousin might be blood-related or a close family friend. Despite these distinctions, ties to family are much stronger than extrafamilial ties. In fact, a person's social network may consist almost entirely of family relations (Austin, 1993). For people living in urban or rural areas away from reservation communities, social networks would likely include more non-family individuals.

Collectivism and Role Expectations. Among many Indigenous cultures, interdependence, cooperation, and mutual assistance are core values. Traditionally, Native people live in "relational networks" consisting of extended family, clan, or tribal group in order to support these values (LaFromboise & Low, 1998). In contrast to the dominant culture in which individual gain is a key measure of success, in Indigenous cultures, individual standing is typically related to the extent to which individuals fulfill their responsibility to be helpful to other members of the family/clan/tribal group. One earns respect by prioritizing the needs of others over one's own needs (Nofz, 1998). Further, individuals are typically expected to fulfill prescribed relationship roles. For example, children are cared for not just by their biological parents, but by all of their relations. Similarly, children are expected to care for one another and may assume parental roles when parents are not available (Cross, 1986). The emphasis on collectivism among Native youth is consistent with stage three of Kohlberg's (1969) theory of moral development, which is char-
characterized by “good interpersonal relations.” In this stage, people conceptualize social interactions as an empathic response to the needs of others.

**Non-interference.** While family members are expected to care for one another, many Native traditions also include the teaching that family members (or others) should not interfere with an individual’s decisions and choices. The belief is that individuals, including children, should be allowed to “work things out in their own manner” (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1991). For example if a Diné person asks a relative for advice, a likely response is “It’s up to you” (R. Walker, personal communication, May 14, 1998). There is a value in autonomy in many Native cultures, where children are expected to make their own decisions and operate semi-independently at an early age (LaFromboise & Low, 1998). Oftentimes, family members allow children choices and the experience of natural consequences as a result of those choices (LaFromboise & Low, 1998). The value of non-interference is grounded in respect for the unique meaningfulness of each individual’s life path and the right each person has to fulfill his or her own destiny. The juxtaposed values of collectivism and non-interference may be difficult to understand from the perspective of the dominant culture; nevertheless, they are core values that make perfect sense in the context of many Native cultures. Accordingly, with such families, it would be inappropriate for substance abuse professionals to do individual therapy with an adolescent without involving key family members. Similarly, it would be inadvisable to conduct an intervention in which family members simultaneously confront a substance-abusing adolescent.

**Resilience**

Resilience, simply stated, is *positive adaptation in response to adversity* (Waller, 2002). Adversity is typically indexed by two categories of *risk factors*: (1) challenging life circumstances (e.g., racism, parental drug use, etc.) and (2) trauma (e.g., experiencing family or community violence, death of a parent, etc.; see Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Risk factors are influences occurring at any systemic level (i.e., individual, family, community, societal) that are associated with later psychosocial problems (e.g., alcoholism,
drug abuse, teen pregnancy, delinquency, and dropping out of school; Jessor, 1993).

Whereas risk factors are thought to jeopardize positive adaptational outcomes (Fraser, 1997), protective factors are thought to facilitate positive outcomes by operating as buffers between individuals and risk factors. Research suggests that the right combination of protective influences can outweigh the negative impact of exposure to multiple risk factors (Werner & Smith, 1992). In fact, it appears that if reasonably good resources are present, outcomes are generally good, even in the context of severe stressors (Matsen et al., 1999).

It should be noted that risk and protective factors are not dichotomous categories. The same circumstance might constitute risk in one situation and protection in another, or might simultaneously present both risk and protection. For example, social support from peers can be a protective factor, but might also be a risk factor if the supportive peer group pressures the individual to participate in self destructive behavior (Waller, 2002). Similarly, if an adolescent's social world is comprised mainly of relatives, the youth may benefit from a strong sense of belonging, but at the same time may suffer from the lack of access to protective extra-familial relationships and resources.

Grounded in resiliency theory within an ecosystemic framework, this study examined the unique risk and protective factors reflected in the narratives of urban Native youth in the Southwest. In particular, two interrelated questions were examined: (1) How were risk and protection manifested for this group of adolescents with regard to substance use/resistance? (2) How did “family” as perceived by the respondents influence their choices related to substance use/resistance?

Method

Qualitative research methods have been used to gain insight into individuals' or groups' conflicts or routines and the meanings they place upon those experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research methods have also been identified as an effective means to build upon knowledge related to drug prevention for Native youth (Ma, Toubbeh, Cline, & Chisholm, 1998).
In this study, these methods were used to gain understanding about Native youths' everyday experiences with alcohol and drugs. Urban Native students' narratives related to risk and protective factors were obtained in focus groups held in 3 middle schools.

**Participants and Procedures**

All of the respondents lived in reservation communities adjacent to a large metropolitan area and attended mainstream metropolitan middle schools. Accordingly, these adolescents literally lived in two worlds. Thirty-two Native students (12 male and 20 female) participated in this study. The youth were between 12 and 15 years of age, and attended one of three public middle schools. These schools were selected for this study because the percentage of Native youth exceeded the statewide average for middle schools in the state. The tribal affiliations of the youth in this study included Pima, Apache, Mojave and Yavapai, and they resided in two urban First Nations communities.

This study used a focus group methodology guided by a semi-structured interview schedule. Focus groups are thought to promote a safe environment in which respondents can share ideas, beliefs, and attitudes in the company of peers from the same socioeconomic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds (Madriz, 2000). In each of the schools, the school counselor recruited participants and obtained parental permission for youth participation in the study. Prior to beginning data collection, the researchers provided orientation sessions in order to (1) establish rapport with the participants, (2) explain the purpose of the study and confidentiality procedures, and (3) respond to questions and concerns from the participants. Ten focus groups ranging from 45 to 60 minutes were conducted either during lunch hour or after school. Groups were gender specific, with four boys groups and six girls groups, and ranged from two to five members each.

The semi-structured interview schedule utilized in the focus groups was composed of questions related to perceived risk and protective factors relevant to high-risk behavior, particularly substance use. Within a “storytelling” format, participants shared their experiences related to questions such as “Have you ever been offered cigarettes, drugs, or alcohol, and if so, what did you
do?,” “Where do kids go to use alcohol or drugs?,” “What makes it hard to resist drugs or alcohol?,” and “If your parents found out that you had been using [drugs], what would they do?” Typically, each of the participants in their respective groups was given the opportunity to respond to each of the questions. Oftentimes, this led to an open discussion regarding Native-specific aspects related to drug and alcohol use, such as the environmental and familial contexts where drug and alcohol use were most likely to occur. In addition to the youth participants, one or two faculty members or graduate students affiliated with a local university in the Southwest facilitated the discussion. The group facilitators were the same gender as the focus group participants.

Data Analysis

All group sessions were tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using a qualitative research software program (QSR NUD.IST, 1999). QSR NUD.IST is one of the most widely utilized code-based theory-building programs (Weitzman, 2000). It has the ability to index textual data as codes, and allows the researcher to build higher-order classifications and categories. In effect, this software makes it possible to develop or expand upon existing theory. Proposed interactions between codes and categories can be evaluated and analyzed by using this program.

Results

The respondents in this study described perceived risk and protective factors related to high-risk situations involving drugs and alcohol in their home communities, in the surrounding communities, and at school. In the scenarios described by respondents, cousins and siblings sometimes pressured respondents to use drugs and alcohol. In other instances, cousins and siblings discouraged respondents from using alcohol and other drugs. Accordingly, relationships with cousins and siblings were a risk factor in some instances and a protective factor in others. The situations described by the participants varied in the degree to which cousins and siblings either pressured participants to use alcohol and drugs or refrain from their use.
Cousins as Risk and Protection

The respondents described a high degree of contact in the school and community with their cousins. Many of these respondents stated that it was common for their cousins to pressure them into using drugs and alcohol. One male respondent described a situation in which he and his friend were being pressured by the respondent's cousin to use alcohol. Within the scenario, the respondent's ability to resist the drug offer coupled with his cousin's permission to not drink both served as protective factors for him.

I guess about a week ago, or three weeks ago, he asked me because we were driving around in the car, [we] just got [into] my friends truck, and we went to [my cousin's] house. He said, "you want a drink?" We said, "no." I said, "no, I don't want to," and sometimes he says "you don't have to if you don't want to." [Sometimes] It's like alright [with him].

In some instances, the dual roles of both peers and family often appeared to have a profound impact on the respondents' ability to resist substances. One female respondent described a situation where her cousin's negative peer pressure influenced her to use drugs.

A: OK. One time I was at my cousin's house and then, um, I don't know, she was smoking marijuana, but I didn't want to smoke it. But she was like, putting peer pressure on me . . . She was like, "Come on, just do it," and stuff like that. But then I didn't want to. But then I ended up getting high. And then after that I never did it again cause it just made me feel weird and uncomfortable. It like scared me? Yeah. And like after [smoking] it like, I don't know, it just felt really weird.
C: How old were you?
A: 12.
MW: So what happened that made you go along with it?
A: She was bugging me too much. [She] kept asking and asking, [even after] I said no. It's just peer pressure, I guess.
MW: Or was she just offering it over and over again.
A: Yeah. I got tired of her asking.

In other scenarios, respondents described situations in which cousins served a protective function for them. One female respon-
dent described how her cousins protected her from the drug and alcohol use of her father by becoming surrogate “fathers” to her.

S6: I tell him, he’s not our dad because of the way he is. I tell him that my three cousins, they’re my dad[s], because they help me.
DH: Are your cousins older adults?
S6: Yeah, yeah. They’ve tried to stop too, drinking and doing drugs, and two of them have. One of them has a son and the other one has four children. And they’re stopping and one of them is moving to Tucson with their cousin.

**Siblings as Risk and Protection**

The respondents’ siblings also functioned as both risk and protection to them in situations involving drugs and alcohol. In terms of risk, one male respondent described how his brother exposed him to a risky situation involving both marijuana and alcohol in their home community.

We were out all night too, drinking. I was not drinking, I was just, I mean I drunk the tequila, [a] bottle of tequila, and I was like messed up and I was walking down the canal. [I] stumbled into my brother, and we went to this girl’s house and then we kicked it inside the house. She just got drunk the whole night and then my brother got high the whole night.

While some of the respondents’ siblings exposed them to high-risk situations, oftentimes they were also a source of protection from dangerous or volatile situations involving drugs and alcohol. Siblings appeared to “look out” for the welfare and well being of their brothers or sisters. One female respondent, for example, described how she “rescued” her older sister from potentially being physically or sexually abused at a party where drugs and alcohol were most likely present.

S1: My sister, my older sister, had to take me places, and she’d take me to her parties and stuff and I’d get along with all her friends. I’d get scared, cause the boys [who go to the parties] are, like, rough and mean. There was this one time when she was in the room with this boy and he was, like, getting mad at her because she wouldn’t do whatever he wanted her to do. And, then, I was like, “Just leave her alone!” [I told my sister] “I want to go home. I don’t want to stay here no more.”
MW: She came out of the room and took you home?
Another female participant described how she protected her younger brothers and sisters by confronting her father and his friends when they were intoxicated.

... I went back in there and I told them to get out. I [said], “You guys either get out or you guys need to be quiet and stop drinking in here.” Somebody said something, and I told them to be quiet. I [said], “This ain’t your house, so don’t be talking to me like that.” I was getting mad at them. My dad [said], “Go back in your room and go to sleep,” ‘cause like, he’s always getting drunk. And, he used to chase us out of our house, too... We used to go to my grandma’s [house].

At times, respondents described how their siblings would function as both risk and protection for them. One male respondent, for example, described how his older brother would use marijuana in front of him, but then would simultaneously protect him from drug offers from his friends. In this scenario, the respondent’s brother risked his social reputation with peers to protect his brother.

D: My brother, he did care [about me] and, if he caught me smoking a joint, he would sock me in the arm a couple of times.
SO: So, he smoked, but he didn’t want you to smoke?
D: Yeah. If one of his friends offered [drugs] to me, he’d turn around to his friend and say, “Hey fool, don’t offer that stuff to my brother. You want to get socked?”

This last quote illustrates the complexity in examining risk and protection with Native youth, as same-generation family members oftentimes both promoted and discouraged substance use with the respondents. Similar to the other scenarios, this scenario illustrates how community and family blend in unique ways to expose respondents to situations involving both risk and protection.

Discussion

Our findings illustrate that same-generation family members can provide both risk and protection for the use of substances,
depending upon the individual and the situation. By examining the ecological context in which they live, it is apparent that various familial and cultural factors influence their choice of behavior in particular situations. Likewise, cultural traditions and practices can simultaneously promote drug and alcohol abstinence and use. The interaction of family, school, and community described in this study appears to intensify risk for these youth, as they can never "escape" from these risk factors, but may also intensify protection, as the family is constantly "looking out" for them in the school, community, and home.

Our findings illustrate how cousins and siblings support substance use in some situations and support abstinence in others. Family kinship networks in Native families are often the most influential sources of social support for Native youth. Further, younger family members often occupy the role of peers in Anglo cultures. While the literature indicates that peers are more influential than family members regarding substance use behaviors of Anglo youth, it is the family that is most influential for Native teens (Swaim, Oetting, Thurman, Beauvais, & Edwards, 1993). As this study indicates, this family influence can be both a protective and a risk factor, with the influence of same-generation family members (cousins and siblings) heightening the effect of negative peer pressure while simultaneously providing a protective buffer against outside influences.

Similar to school peers in the Anglo culture, cousins and siblings appear to provide a strong peer influence inside and outside of the school setting. However, unlike the Anglo culture, the family influences of collectivism and non-interference in the Native culture appear to have an added significant impact on same-generation family members in the school setting. In terms of risk, participants in the study often stated that it was more difficult to refuse drug offers from family members such as cousins or siblings than from friends at school. Implicit in this statement is the participants' expressed need to respect the behavioral and social expectations of same-generation family members. In terms of protection, our findings suggest that cousins and siblings had a greater sense of responsibility and investment in their same generation family members versus non-related peers. Thus, although same generation family members
sometimes exposed participants to risky environments involving drugs or alcohol, they often compensated through protective behaviors, such as defending the best interests of their cousins and siblings.

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

Most school-based substance abuse prevention programs have a problem focus, and attempt to teach youth generic skills to resist drug offers. Studies on these programs have described how they have been developed and evaluated with primarily White, middle-class youth samples (e.g., Life Skills Training; Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Diaz, 1995). There is little acknowledgement of the unique worldviews of youth of color and the cultural specificity and applicability of resistance skills. This study highlights the importance of working directly with family networks to either affect current drug use or to prevent future use. Substance abuse prevention for Native youth might entail working with small, family-specific groups in the school setting and larger family networks in the reservation community. Native-based substance abuse prevention in the schools might involve reinforcing protective behaviors elicited by same-generation family members, such as efforts to redirect or avoid situations involving drugs and/or alcohol (see Okamoto, Hurdle, & Marsiglia, 2001, for a review of Native-specific drug resistance strategies). On the reservation, a similar process involving other extended family members and elders might occur. In effect, substance use prevention would incorporate the use of environmental strengths and culturally specific resistance strategies that are already present in the schools and on the reservation.

**Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations of this study. First, youth from only two tribes in the Southwest United States were studied. As there are significant differences between Native tribes, this data may not be representative of all Native youth. Second, the small number of adolescents participating in the study may not reflect the beliefs and practices of all adolescents in the two tribes studied. Future research in the area of Native youth substance use/resistance might explore youth resiliency to substance use
in other tribes, for comparison purposes, and with other cultural groups.

In conclusion, this study advances the study of resiliency by identifying the multiple layers of both risk and protection that exist in Native families and kinship systems. Unlike other cultural groups, Native communities may have more complex and intertwined risk and protective factors due to strong extended family kinship systems, more prevalent use of alcohol by youth and adults, and the consequences of habitual use (e.g., legal, medical, violence, separation due to incarceration). When examining the substance use behaviors of various groups of adolescents, it is crucial to consider the ecological context as it both supports and resists youth drug use.

References


A Comprehensive Analysis of Sex and Race Inequities in Unemployment Insurance Benefits

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This research makes a unique contribution to the growing body of literature on the welfare system by examining the relationship between sex, race, and social insurance benefits in a rural state. Using data from the West Virginia Unemployment Compensation Program, this research investigates sex and race differences in (1) monetary disqualifications for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits and (2) separation issue and nonseparation issue disqualifications of UI benefits. The analyses indicate that unemployed women, people of color, younger, and low income workers are the most likely to fail the monetary qualifications for UI benefits and to lose qualified weeks of UI benefits.

Keywords: gender, inequities, racial inequities, unemployment, unemployment insurance, benefits, distribution of benefits, social insurance benefits

Introduction

An individual’s occupation determines his or her social status, income, potential for advancement, type of benefits, the potential for unemployment, and even the resources available to them if they become unemployed. The type of jobs available to workers in the United States has changed drastically over the last 25 years. High-wage manufacturing jobs have been steadily replaced by part-time, contingency, and/or service employment (Schram 1995; Wilson 1997). Jobs in the service industry are known for their minimum wage dependence, lack of unionization, limited job benefits, and limited job security. Consequently,
as the service sector continues to grow, so does the potential economic vulnerability and hardship of our labor force.

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) program is one part of the welfare system that is supposed to address the problems associated with such labor market vulnerability. The question many social scientists have raised is the overall effectiveness and fairness of this program, particularly for women and people of color (Amott 1990; Bassi and McMurrer 1997; Bingham 1995; Blaustein 1993; Gordon 1994; Latimer 1999; Maranville 1992; Mink 1990; Nelson 1990; Pearce 1990; Pearce 1986; Pearce and McAdoo 1981).

This research project makes a unique contribution to the growing body of literature on the welfare system by examining the relationship between sex, race, and social insurance benefits for unemployed West Virginia workers. The primary purpose of this research is to investigate state level trends in receipt of unemployment insurance (UI) for workers who are unemployed and have applied for UI in West Virginia in 1997. Using the feminist scholarship on the welfare state as the overall theoretical framework, this research investigates sex and race differences in (1) unemployment insurance qualification (i.e., whether or not workers monetarily qualify for unemployment insurance benefits once they become unemployed), (2) separation issue disqualifications of UI benefits (i.e., losing eligible weeks of benefits because they voluntarily quit their job, were fired for misconduct, etc.), and (3) nonseparation issue disqualifications of UI benefits (i.e., losing eligible weeks of benefits because they failed to register for work, did not accept suitable employment, etc.).

There are several reasons why extensive state-level data are required for this research. First, the major monetary qualification for UI benefits (i.e., the minimum earnings requirement) is state specific (Nicholson 1997). Second, variations in UI receipt may be partly a function of state government policy on unemployment insurance and local variation in administration. Thus, national level data obscures the discretionary power of individual states. In addition, national samples typically do not contain enough cases from rural states to analyze the issues. Even with large data sets that oversample disadvantaged workers (i.e., the National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth-NLSY), many critical questions
are left unanswered because the data sets are not designed to examine patterns in UI receipt.

Research on a rural state's social insurance program is particularly significant given (1) the majority of the research on poverty and the welfare system has focused on poor families in urban areas (Rural Sociological Society Task Force 1993), (2) the poverty rates in rural areas are consistently higher than those in urban areas and these rates are not declining (Zimmerman et al 1999), (3) researchers have already documented rural deficits in public assistance benefits (Amott 1990; Pearce 1989; Rank 1994; Tickamyer et al. 1993), (4) economic inequality has grown over the past 25 years (particularly the socioeconomic gap between rural and urban areas) while the actual percentage of workers qualifying for unemployment insurance benefits has declined, and (5) one of the best ways to test the UI program (i.e., a program designed to provide income security to displaced workers) is to examine its effectiveness in helping economically vulnerable workers in a rural state with consistently the highest unemployment and poverty rates in the nation.

This research on West Virginia's social insurance program adds to our understanding of stratification by examining sex and race inequities in state policies for disadvantaged workers. This research is particularly relevant in a postindustrial society where global competition and continued institutionalized occupational and income inequality compound the historic problems with distribution programs designed for an industrialized society.

The Unemployment Compensation Program

Feminist scholarship on the welfare system documents a strong connection between discrimination, domination, and control of the state (Gordon 1994). More specifically, feminist researchers argue that by consistently providing minimum income assistance to some groups (i.e., social assistance) or by excluding certain groups from higher paying income security programs (i.e., social insurance), the welfare system performs the following functions: (1) it reinforces sexual and racial economic subordination, (2) it maintains white male domination over women and people of color, and (3) it mediates power relations "between politically
dominant and politically repressed groups" (Quadagno 1990:26). Thus, welfare programs, as an embodiment of state capacity and decision-making individuals and processes (Weir, Orloff, and Skocpol 1988), "have a great deal to do with maintaining social and economic inequities" (Piven and Cloward 1971:xvii), especially those that stem from sex, race, and place (Gordon 1990; Mink 1990; Nelson 1990; Pearce 1990; Quadagno 1990).

According to this scholarship, the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program was specifically designed during the depression of the 1930s for male heads of households with longstanding commitments to the labor force who became unemployed due to structural changes in the labor market (Pearce 1990). This federal/state partnership was designed based on the labor force patterns of regularly employed white male urban workers. Consequently, it is structurally biased against any worker whose labor force participation patterns differ from workers with longstanding attachments to the labor market (Bassi and McMurrer 1997; Bingham 1995; Blaustein 1993; Gordon 1994; Latimer 1999; Maranville 1992; Pearce 1986).

For example, not all jobs are covered by the unemployment insurance program. States have enormous discretion in setting the specific tax provisions and benefits for the UI system. In general, the status of the employer (i.e., paying or not paying UI taxes) determines the UI coverage of each employee (Bassi and McMurrer 1997). According to Bingham (1995) "approximately 12% of the work force works in employment not covered by unemployment compensation" (p. 944). Nationwide, jobs that are not covered by unemployment insurance are disproportionately filled by women, people of color, and rural workers. They include self-employed workers, domestic laborers who are paid less than $1,000 in one quarter, workers employed in religious organizations, and in some states, agricultural workers who work on small farms (Bassi and McMurrer 1997).

In West Virginia, employers have to cover domestic workers if they pay $1,000 or more in a calendar quarter. Religious, charitable, educational, or other nonprofit organizations are liable for UI taxes if they have four or more individuals for some portion of the day, for at least 20 weeks a year. Individuals working in a
Inequities in Benefits

rehabilitative program are not covered for UI benefits. Not all agricultural jobs are covered by UI benefits in West Virginia. Employers who have agricultural employment of ten or more individuals for some portion (e.g., it can be for one hour or eight hours) of at least one day for 20 different weeks in a calendar year must cover each of their employees (West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs 1997).

West Virginia, like thirteen other states, has "adopted special provisions intended to restrict the eligibility of seasonal workers" (Nicholson 1997:99). All employers who have (1) employed one or more individuals during some portion of a day for 20 weeks out of a calendar year or (2) pay $1500 in total wages in a calendar quarter, must cover their seasonal employees with UI benefits in West Virginia. For those who are self-employed (i.e., the sole proprietor) or a partner, they are not liable to cover themselves, their spouses, their children, or their parents with UI benefits. If the organization is a corporation, everyone must be covered (West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs 1997).

Coverage does not automatically guarantee receipt of UI benefits. In order to qualify for unemployment insurance, workers must meet a minimum earnings and work time requirement. Individuals in West Virginia are monetarily denied UI benefits if (1) they do not make enough wages in the base period to qualify, (2) they make at least $2,200 in the base period but it was all in one quarter, or (3) they do not re-qualify for benefits. Part-time, seasonal, service, and agricultural workers have lower average earnings and more difficulty meeting the minimum income requirement for UI.

A monetary eligibility for UI benefits does not guarantee full payment of those benefits. Unemployed West Virginia workers who monetarily qualify for UI benefits can receive up to 26 weeks of UI payments if certain weeks do not get disqualified. An unemployed worker must have become unemployed "on good terms" to avoid weeks of disqualification due to a separation issue. In other words, the terms of their unemployment can cause them to lose weeks of benefits. Employers provide the reasons for unemployment and if disputed by the employee, an UI benefits officer confers with both to determine the terms of
unemployment. Examples of separation issue disqualifications include voluntary quits or being discharged due to misconduct. Workers who voluntarily quit their jobs for "good cause" can collect UI in West Virginia if the employer is at fault for the quit. The worker must prove that the employer did something wrong such as sexually harassing the employee, changing their hiring agreement (i.e., drastically cutting their hours or their pay), or trying to make them relocate. Workers who voluntarily quit to follow their spouses or because they cannot find satisfactory child care to enable them to work, would be denied benefits in West Virginia.

Unemployed workers can also have weeks of their UI benefits disqualified because they failed to follow criteria outlined by the UI office to remain eligible for UI benefits (i.e., a nonseparation issue). Frequent causes for a nonseparation disqualification are that the claimant was not able and available for work, the claimant failed to meet the reporting requirements (i.e., did not report to the UI office every two weeks or provide a valid reason for not reporting), the claimant was only partially unemployed, the claimant was not registered for work with job services within six weeks, the claimant was receiving annuity, pension pay, and the claimant failed to accept suitable work (i.e., a job within 10% of their previous wages). Individuals who have pieced together two part-time jobs to survive economically would be denied benefits upon losing one job because they are seen as only partially unemployed. Transportation barriers are not seen as legitimate reasons for failing to meet the nonseparation qualifications.

In summary, there are structural inequities built into the social insurance program in terms of coverage and qualifications for benefits. Individuals who are over-concentrated in part-time jobs, seasonal jobs, agricultural jobs, family owned businesses and/or low paying service sector jobs are unlikely to qualify for the better paying, less stigmatized unemployment insurance when they become unemployed. These disadvantaged workers must rely on the highly limited, stigmatized social assistance programs such as AFDC/TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, and public housing. Labor market disadvantage clearly translates into welfare vulnerability.
The Connection Between Unemployment Insurance, Sex, Race, and Place

The occupations that are not covered by UI benefits or that have the most difficulty meeting the eligibility requirements for UI benefits are disproportionately filled by women and people of color. A recent report by the Congressional Research Service found that individuals who are “young, did not head families, and were not the primary source of income within their families” and had “lower-than-average incomes both before and after their unemployment spell” (Bassi and McMurrer 1997:73) were the least likely of all unemployed individuals to be receiving unemployment insurance benefits.

Because women, whether they have partners or not, are held responsible for domestic labor and childcare (Folbre 1984; Hurst 2001; McLanahan 1985), they face the choice of working fewer hours and having less income or enduring greater stress (Tickamyer and Tickamyer 1988). Divorce further restricts women’s labor force participation as women become solely responsible for their children’s physical, economic, and emotional welfare (Pearce 1990). These responsibilities can be even more intense for African American women because overall black communities have greater poverty than white communities and consequently, fewer resources to offer these women (Hurst 2001; Pearce 1989).

Women also work fewer hours than men because there is a growing preference for part-time employment, particularly in female dominated occupations and industries. In the late eighties and early 1990s, twenty percent of all workers were employed part-time and over twenty-five percent of all female workers worked part-time. African American women are even more likely to be part-time workers than white women (Reskin and Padavic 2003; Pearce 1989).

Part-time workers have lower earnings (due to fewer working hours), higher levels of occupational segregation (Reskin and Padavic 2003), and more difficulty meeting the minimum income or the availability qualification requirement for UI. Pearce argues that some working mothers may actually choose to work part-time, but others are forced into part-time work because day care or after-school care costs outweigh the benefits of full-time
employment. Thus, women's childrearing responsibilities, the lack of publicly subsidized child care, and "the increasing demand for relatively cheap services come together to reinforce the pattern of part-time, low wage employment for many women workers" (Pearce 1986:147).

Women's labor force participation patterns also differ from men by the sectors in which they continue to be highly concentrated. The sex segregated occupational structure relegates and isolates women, particularly women of color, primarily in the periphery, secondary, and service sectors of the labor market (Hurst 2001; Reskin and Padavic 2003; Stafford and Fossett 1989). Although women's labor force participation and placement have changed dramatically, a large proportion of women workers occupy traditionally "female" jobs (Pearce 1986). In fact Reskin and Padavic (2003) found that "of the 57 million women in the labor force in 1990, one third worked in just 10 of the 503 detailed occupations" (p. 422). They also document that 60 percent of black women and 53 percent of white women would have to shift occupations to jobs predominately occupied by white males in order for the labor market to be completely integrated by sex and race (Reskin and Padavic 2003:422).

Recent changes in the structure of the economy (such as the decrease in high wage industry jobs) have increased competition for more limited employment opportunities, and therefore, led to an even greater confinement of women in lower paid sectors of the occupational structure. Technological innovations and deskilling have eliminated many of the traditional jobs held by women (i.e., clerical work) (Tickamyer and Tickamyer 1988).

Women's child care responsibilities, their lower average hours worked per week, their greater part-time employment, their segregation and isolation in the secondary sector of the labor market, as well as continued gender and racial discrimination (Reskin and Padavic 2003) result in average hourly earnings that are significantly lower than hourly wages earned by men. The average woman still earns about 76 percent of the total average income earned (per week) by males (Hurst 2001:68). Single mothers earn, on average, between 30% to 40% of the income earned by two-parent families headed by men. Even when single mothers with children (under six years old) work full-time at paid labor,
more than one-third of these individuals are poor (Pearce and McAdoo 1981). According to Hurst (2001) “Female-headed families have continued to possess poverty rates that are over six times those of married-couples” (p. 27). Race compounds the effects of gender and household structure. African American women are even more disadvantaged with an income that is approximately 86 percent of the total income earned by white single women (Hurst 2001:106). These lower average incomes make it difficult for women to meet the minimum earnings qualifications for unemployment insurance benefits (Pearce 1986).

Rural areas have a disproportionate concentration of the occupations that are not covered by UI benefits and/or that have the most difficulty meeting the eligibility requirements for UI benefits. Rural labor markets lack diversity and are typically dominated by farm based economies, the service industries, and nondurable manufacturing sectors (i.e., periphery and secondary sector jobs) (Tickamyer and Duncan 1990).

Rural communities have been particularly hard hit by deindustrialization and economic restructuring. According to Zimmerman et al. (1999) “Between 1969 and 1992, rural manufacturing employment dipped from 20.4% to 16.9% of total employment” (p. 8). Almost one-quarter of rural workers were employed in the service sector in 1996. Most of the service sector growth in rural areas has been in the low wage sector of the service industry (Gorham, 1992). The higher paying jobs have education and training qualifications that few rural workers can meet (Tickamyer and Duncan 1990). Both the working poor and involuntary part time workers in rural areas had a significantly more difficult time finding adequate jobs in the 1990s than their counterparts in the 1970s (Zimmerman et al. 1999).

The low wage employment that dominates rural areas is compounded by the fact that neither the sex segregation of the labor market (Goudy et al. 1986) nor racial inequalities in income (Cho and Ogunwolé 1989) have significantly decreased in rural areas. In addition, rural people have fewer child care and transportation resources and longer commutes to potential jobs than their urban counterparts (Zimmerman et al. 1999).

The statistics on West Virginia’s labor force reflect these sex, race, and rural trends. West Virginia has one of the highest unem-
ployment rates in the nation (higher for African Americans than whites), a higher than average rate of occupational and industrial sex segregation, an overconcentration of workers in the service industry (i.e., 50 percent of women and 20 percent of men found in the service industries), a larger percent of women working part-time and only part of the year than in the nation, the lowest college graduation rate in the nation and one of the highest income gaps between full-time male and female workers (i.e., women earn on average 58 percent of their male counterparts) (Hannah 1995: 17–29).

Research Design

Data

Data for this research come from the West Virginia Unemployment Compensation Program, a subunit of the West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs. The data include all claims made for unemployment insurance in January, May, September, and December of 1997. The cost of data extraction restricted the study to four months of analysis. Data for the two months in 1997 with the most UI claims made and the two months in 1997 with the least claims made were extracted to examine the relationship between high/low demands on the system and UI receipt.

Approximately 37,000 unemployed workers in West Virginia applied for UI benefits during these four months. According to O'Leary (2000) only about 35 percent of all unemployed individuals receive UI benefits (p. 2). The total number of unemployed workers in West Virginia for the four months examined in this research was 220,900 people. Thus, only 16.8 percent of the unemployed in West Virginia actually applied for their benefits. Other research shows that the rural poor and unemployed are much less likely to apply for public assistance benefits than their urban counterparts (Rank and Hirschl 1993). The reasons given are that those economically disadvantaged in rural areas have less knowledge about their eligibility for such programs, and/or there is a greater stigma in using these benefits in these areas (Rank and Hirschl 1993). I would argue that these factors also explain lower applications for UI benefits in rural areas. I would also add that the over-concentration of minimum wage jobs in rural areas make
the UI benefits so low that they are simply not worth the time and energy required to receive them.

The UI data set contains individual level information such as sex, race/ethnicity, age, education, county of residence, occupation the respondent asked the program to job search for, whether or not the applicant meets the monetary requirement for UI, which part of the monetary requirement did the individual fail, the weekly UI benefit amount for qualified workers, the non-monetary reasons for disqualification, and length of time disqualified due to a non-monetary violation. Unfortunately, the occupation variable could not be used because about fifty percent of the cases were missing.

The UI data were merged with West Virginia county level data from the census (i.e., Census of Housing and Population, County-City Data Book, County-Statistics File 4, and the Regional Economic Information System) so that measures of the local labor market could be included in the models. The West Virginia county level data include the following information on the individual’s county of residence: is it a rural or urban county, what is the population density, does the county have a diverse industry structure, is it in a metropolitan area or near an interstate, and does the county have large concentrations of federal, manufacturing, mining, or farming employment.

Measures

Dependent Variables

The first dependent variable measures monetary eligibility for UI benefits. If the worker (1) failed to make $2,200 in the base period, (2) made at least $2,200 but it was not in the first four of the last five completed quarters, or (3) did not earn enough money to re-qualify for benefits, they have a MONETARY DISQUALIFICATION. About 3% of unemployed West Virginia workers in this study failed to meet the monetary requirements for UI benefits.

The second dependent variable represents whether or not the worker is disqualified due to a separation issue. About 5.4% of unemployed West Virginia workers receiving UI lose at least one week of their UI benefits due to a separation issue. If an unemployed worker loses weeks of eligibility for any of the four
major separation issues (i.e., voluntarily quitting their previous job, voluntarily quitting due to retirement, being discharged from their previous job due to misconduct, and being discharged for gross or aggravated misconduct), they have a SEPARATION ISSUE DISQUALIFICATION.

The third dependent variable measures whether or not the worker is disqualified due to a nonseparation issue. About 3% of unemployed West Virginia workers receiving UI lose at least one week of their UI benefits due to a nonseparation issue. If an unemployed worker loses weeks of eligibility for any of the six major nonseparation disqualifications (i.e., the claimant was not able and available for work, the claimant failed to meet the reporting requirements, the claimant was only partially unemployed, the claimant was not registered for work, the claimant was receiving annuity, pension pay, and the claimant failed to accept suitable work), they have a NONSEPARATION ISSUE DISQUALIFICATION.

Independent Variables

A number of individual level and county level measures which are linked to economic vulnerability are used as independent variables. The sex of the respondent is indicated in the FEMALE variable. WHITE is the race/ethnicity of the respondent where black, Asian, Native American, or Latino individuals are coded as zero and white is coded as one. AGE is the actual age of the respondent. EDUCATION is the number of years of education completed by the respondent. Originally, there were about 40% of the responses missing on education. To avoid losing this variable, I created 13 age ranges and calculated the average education level based on these five year age categories (i.e., under 25 years old, between 25 and 29 years old, between 30 and 34 years old, between 35 and 39 years old, between 40 and 44 years old, between 75 and 79 years old, and greater than 79 years old). I then replaced the missing cases with the educational mean for the appropriate age category. BASE PERIOD WAGES is the amount of wages used to determine the claimant’s weekly benefit amount.

Researchers have found that the probability of a welfare recipient exiting the welfare system is positively associated with the county’s unemployment rate and the welfare caseload (Brazzell,
Lefbert, and Opitz 1989; O'Neill et al 1984; Rank 1994). These results appear counterintuitive. Rank explains (1994:165): “The key to understanding this relationship is the effect that increased pressure has on finite resources”. As unemployment and poverty rates increase, more and more individuals turn to public assistance and put “greater pressure on the existing system and its resources, both financial and otherwise (e.g., number of staff, physical facilities, available time, and so on)” (Rank 1994:165). It is possible that increased demands for UI services can cause a “tightening up” of eligibility requirements for these benefits. To investigate this possibility, the HIGH APPLICANTS variable was constructed. HIGH APPLICANTS represents the month in which the originally UI claim was made. If a claim was made in the two months with the highest number of UI applicants (i.e., January or December) the response is coded as 1. A zero represents claims made in either of the two months with the lowest number of UI applicants (i.e., May or September).

The local labor market measures come from several county-level data sources: Census of Housing and Population, County-City Data Book, County-Statistics File 4, and the Regional Economic Information System. The measures of the ecological structure are METROPOLITAN AREA or URBAN AREA. Both of these similar variables measure the competitiveness of the local labor market area. Workers who live in an urban area or a metropolitan area should have more opportunities than workers outside these areas. METROPOLITAN AREA is whether or not the claimant’s county falls into a metropolitan area. The URBAN AREA variable indicates that the county in which the respondent lives is urban or rural. Using a category scheme devised by the West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs, urban counties are defined as those counties located in a metropolitan statistical area or any counties with cities of 10,000 individuals or more. This classification designates 17 out of 55 counties in West Virginia as urban (i.e., Kanawha, Putnam, Cabell, Wayne, Wood, Ohio, Marshall, Brooke, Hancock, Mineral, Berkeley, Jefferson, Monongalia, Marion, Harrison, Raleigh, and Mercer). The remaining 38 counties are designated as rural.

In 1995, 61 percent of the state’s total population resided in the urban counties (WV Bureau of Employment Programs 1996). This
rural/urban measure is also an indirect measure of the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate for the rural counties in 1995 was double the national average at 10.8 percent. In contrast, all of the urban counties experienced single-digit unemployment rates and captured over 75% of the new jobs developed between 1987 and 1995. Correspondingly, the per capita income in urban counties ($18,851) is well above the average per capita income earned in rural counties ($14,393) (West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs 1996).

Two indicators of the local business climate are the log of the total 1989 earnings in a county from the mining sector (LOG MINING) and the agriculture/forestry sector (LOG FARMING). There is also a SUSTENANCE DIVERSITY variable. SUSTENANCE DIVERSITY is a measure of the dispersion of private nonfarm employees in the county across seven industry sectors. The industry sectors include manufacturing, transportation, services, finance, insurance, and real estate, construction, wholesale trade and retail trade. High positive values on this variable indicate that the local economy is complex and has a diverse industry structure (Mencken 1997). This variable was standardized by converting it into z-scores.

Data Analysis

The statistical technique used to analyze the data is logistic regression. Given that one goal of this research is to investigate variations in the impacts of labor market measures across the state, the labor market measures are entered first for each model and are then followed by the individual variables in the second stage.

Results

About 76 percent of all unemployment insurance applicants in West Virginia are male. Almost 3 percent of the applicants are people of color. The UI applicants are on average 38 years old, have completed 12 years of education, and received $18,425 in wages during the base period. The majority of the applicants live in a rural county (52.9 percent) and applied for benefits during either January or December of 1997 (71.9 percent). About
97 percent of all applicants meet the monetary requirement for
unemployment insurance benefits, 5.5 percent have weeks of
benefits disqualified due to a separation issue, and 3.0 percent
lose benefits due to a nonseparation issue.

The results from the bivariate crosstabulations and t-tests are
found in Table 1. There are significant sex and race differences
in monetary eligibility, separation issue disqualifications, non-
separation issue disqualifications, base period wages, and weekly
UI benefit amounts. A significantly larger percent of women
and people of color are monetarily ineligible for UI (i.e., not
having enough wages in their base period or did not re-qualify for
benefits), have weeks of UI receipt disqualified due to a separation
issue, and lose weeks of UI receipt due to a non-separation issue.
In addition, women and people of color have significantly lower
average base period wages and weekly UI benefit amounts.

Table 2 contains the results from the MONETARY DISQUAL-
IFICATION logistic regression. METROPOLITAN AREA is a sig-
nificant predictor of meeting the monetary qualifications for UI
benefits in Step 1. Unemployed workers who live in a county
that falls within a metropolitan area are 1.23 times more likely to
meet the monetary requirements for unemployment insurance
than unemployed workers who live in a county outside of a
metropolitan area. METROPOLITAN AREA remains significant
and LOG FARMING becomes significant when the individual
level variables are added in Step 2. Unemployed workers who
live in a county with higher earnings in the agriculture/forestry
sector are significantly less likely to monetarily qualify for UI
benefits than unemployed workers in counties with low agricul-
ture/forestry earnings. In fact, a one percent increase in the total
county earnings in the agriculture/forestry sector results in a 6
percent decrease in the odds that an unemployed worker will
meet the monetary qualification for UI benefits.

Sex, race, and age are also significant predictors of meeting the
monetary requirements for UI benefits. As expected, unemployed
men, whites, and older workers are more likely than unemployed
women, people of color, and younger workers to monetarily qual-
ify for UI benefits. Unemployed female workers are 1.54 times
less likely than their male counterparts and unemployed people
of color are 1.54 times less likely than their white counterparts to
Table 1

Results from Bivariate Crosstabulations and T-Tests by Sex and Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>WHITES</th>
<th>PEOPLE OF COLOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monetary Ineligibility</td>
<td>2.91%</td>
<td>4.17%***</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
<td>4.57%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Enough Wages in Base Period</td>
<td>2.24%</td>
<td>3.12%***</td>
<td>2.35%</td>
<td>3.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages All in One Quarter</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
<td>0.16%*</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>0.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Re-qualify</td>
<td>0.38%</td>
<td>0.89%***</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
<td>1.04%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation Issue Disqualifications</td>
<td>4.27%</td>
<td>9.19%***</td>
<td>5.33%</td>
<td>13.30%***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Separation Issue Disqualifications</td>
<td>2.36%</td>
<td>4.98%***</td>
<td>2.92%</td>
<td>5.84%***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Period Wages</td>
<td>$20,488.55</td>
<td>$12,224.50***</td>
<td>$18,644.77</td>
<td>$14,928.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>($13,405.49)</td>
<td>($8,664.090)</td>
<td>($12,937.20)</td>
<td>($12,198.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly UI Benefit Amount</td>
<td>$188.38</td>
<td>$124.00***</td>
<td>$174.08</td>
<td>$143.99***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>($91.66)</td>
<td>($74.16)</td>
<td>($91.88)</td>
<td>($90.38)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Indicates significant sex or race differences at \( p = .001 \)
** Indicates significant sex or race differences at \( p = .01 \)
* Indicates significant sex or race differences at \( p = .05 \)
**Table 2**

(Logistic Regression of MONETARY DISQUALIFICATION on Labor Market and Individual Variables (N = 37011))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$b^1$</td>
<td>S.E. $^2$</td>
<td>O/R$^3$</td>
<td>$b^1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Area</td>
<td>-.2047**</td>
<td>.0759</td>
<td>.815</td>
<td>-.1879**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.0522)</td>
<td>(1.23)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-.0479)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Farming</td>
<td>.0458</td>
<td>.0242</td>
<td></td>
<td>.0560*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0330)</td>
<td>(.0405)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Mining</td>
<td>.0043</td>
<td>.0179</td>
<td></td>
<td>.0120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0045)</td>
<td>(.0124)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.4315***</td>
<td>.0656</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.1011)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-.4342**</td>
<td>.1604</td>
<td>.648</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.0374)</td>
<td>(1.54)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.0335***</td>
<td>.0029</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.2068)</td>
<td>(1.03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.0314</td>
<td>.0201</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.0258)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Applicants</td>
<td>.0529</td>
<td>.0677</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0131)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
<td>206.80***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2$</td>
<td>16.03***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pR$^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td>.214</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^1$ The unstandardized coefficients are presented first with the standardized coefficients listed below in parentheses.

$^2$ These are the standard errors.

$^3$ The numbers in this column are the odds/ratios.

meet the monetary requirements for unemployment insurance benefits. Further analyses revealed that younger workers and females are more likely to fail the monetary requirement because they did not make enough money in the base period while older workers and males are more likely to fail the monetary requirement because all of their income came within one quarter.

A one year increase in age results in a 3% increase in the odds that an unemployed worker will monetarily qualify for UI
benefits. It is interesting to note that all these significant relationships disappear when the model controls for the worker's base period wages. This finding implies that it is the labor market income inequities experienced by workers who are female, people of color, and younger that puts them at such a disadvantage in terms of qualifying for UI benefits. Overall, these results correspond with Bassi and McMurrer's (1997) finding that "The majority of the unemployed who do not meet their state monetary eligibility requirements are either new entrants to the labor force, reentrants to the labor force, or individuals with sporadic labor force participation" (p.76).

Table 3 contains the results from the SEPARATION ISSUE DISQUALIFICATION logistic regression. Both URBAN AREA and LOG FARMING are significant predictors of being disqualified due to a separation issue in Step 1 of the analysis. Unemployed workers who live in an urban county are 1.46 times more likely than unemployed rural workers to lose weeks of UI benefits due to a separation issue (i.e., they are more likely to have voluntarily quit their previous job or to be discharged from their previous job due to misconduct). Thus, unemployed rural workers are either less likely to voluntarily quit their jobs or they are less likely to have been discharged due to misconduct than their urban counterparts. It is possible that workers in urban counties have more potential job opportunities and thus are less tolerant of unsatisfactory working circumstances.

In terms of farming concentration, unemployed workers in counties with low farming concentration are more likely to have weeks disqualified due to a separation issue than their counterparts in high farming concentration counties. A one percent increase in the total county earnings in the agriculture/forestry sector results in a 7 percent decrease in the odds that an unemployed worker will have UI benefits disqualified due to a separation issue. URBAN AREA and LOG FARMING remain significant even when the individual level variables are added in Step 2.

All of the individual level variables except education are significant predictors of a separation issue disqualification. As in the monetary qualification model, unemployed women, people of color, and younger workers are more likely than unemployed
Table 3

**Logistic Regression of SEPARATION ISSUE DISQUALIFICATION on Labor Market and Individual Variables (N = 37011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>b</strong></td>
<td><strong>S.E.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Area</td>
<td>.3756***</td>
<td>.0513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustenance Diversity</td>
<td>.0117</td>
<td>.0068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Farming</td>
<td>-.0705***</td>
<td>.0179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.6238***</td>
<td>.0505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-.7459***</td>
<td>.1038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.0313***</td>
<td>.0024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.0092</td>
<td>.0157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Applicants</td>
<td>-.8226***</td>
<td>.0468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Period Wages</td>
<td>-.0000***</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-3.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(X^2\)  121.94***  1105.64***

\(pR^2\) .285

4 The unstandardized coefficients are presented first with the standardized coefficients listed below in parentheses.

5 These are the standard errors.

6 The numbers in this column are the odds/ratios.

men, whites, and older workers to have weeks of their UI benefits disqualified due to a separation issue (i.e., they are more likely to have voluntarily quit or to be discharged due to misconduct). Unemployed women are 1.87 times more likely than unemployed men to be disqualified due to a separation issue. Unemployed people of color are 2.11 times more likely than their
white counterparts to be disqualified from UI benefits due to a separation issue. A one year increase in age results in a 3 percent decrease in the odds that an unemployed worker will experience a separation issue disqualification of their UI benefits. In addition, unemployed low income workers are more likely to experience a separation issue disqualification than unemployed high income workers. A one dollar increase in base period wages results in a 1% decrease that an unemployed worker will experience a separation issue disqualification of their UI benefits. Further analyses revealed that younger workers, males, and people of color are more likely to be disqualified because they were discharged due to misconduct while whites, older workers, and females are more likely to be disqualified because they voluntarily quit their last job.

One surprising finding was the significant relationship between month of UI application and a separation issue disqualification. Unemployed workers who applied for UI benefits in the months with the least applicants (i.e., May or September) are over two times more likely than January/December (i.e., the months with the most applicants) applicants to have their UI benefits reduced due to a separation issue. It is possible that May and September have the least applicants because the unemployment level is lower during these months. When the unemployment level is lower, there are more job opportunities for workers. In times of high employment West Virginia workers maybe less tolerant of unsatisfactory working circumstances and thus are more likely to quit these jobs or voice their dissatisfaction and be discharged because of misconduct. It is also possible that UI officers have more time to scrutinize each application when the application rate is lower.

Table 4 contains the results from the NONSEPARATION ISSUE DISQUALIFICATION logistic regression. LOG FARMING is a significant predictor of being disqualified due to a nonseparation issue in Step 1 of the analysis. Unemployed workers in counties with low farming concentration are more likely to have weeks disqualified due to a nonseparation issue than their counterparts in high farming concentration counties. A one percent increase in the total county earnings in the agriculture/forestry sector results in a 14 percent decrease in the odds that an unemployed worker
Table 4
Logistic Regression of NONSEPARATION ISSUE DISQUALIFICATION on Labor Market and Individual Variables (N = 37011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( b^7 )</td>
<td>S.E.(^8 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Area</td>
<td>( .0356 )</td>
<td>( .0668 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustenance</td>
<td>( .0080 )</td>
<td>( .0085 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>( -.1326*** )</td>
<td>( .0215 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Farming</td>
<td>( -.0958 )</td>
<td>(1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>( .6039*** )</td>
<td>( .0672 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>( -.5289*** )</td>
<td>( .1462 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>( -.0076* )</td>
<td>( .0030 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>( .0699*** )</td>
<td>( .0210 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Applicants</td>
<td>( -.5099*** )</td>
<td>( .0632 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Period</td>
<td>( -.0000*** )</td>
<td>( .0000 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>( -.0858 )</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>( -4.22 )</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( X^2 )</td>
<td>43.79***</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pR(^2 )</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) The unstandardized coefficients are presented first with the standardized coefficients listed below in parentheses.

\(^8\) These are the standard errors.

\(^9\) The numbers in this column are the odds/ratios.

will have UI benefits disqualified due to a nonseparation issue. LOG FARMING remains significant even when the individual level variables are added in Step 2.

All of the individual level variables are significant predictors of a nonseparation issue disqualification. As in the previous model, unemployed women, people of color, younger workers,
and low income workers are more likely than unemployed men, whites, older workers, and high income workers to have weeks of their UI benefits disqualified due to a nonseparation issue (i.e., because they failed to follow criteria outlined by the UI office to remain eligible for UI benefits). Unemployed women are 1.83 times more likely than unemployed men to be disqualified due to a nonseparation issue. Unemployed people of color are 1.70 times more likely than their white counterparts to be disqualified from UI benefits due to a nonseparation issue.

A one year increase in age results in a 1% decrease in the odds that an unemployed worker will experience a nonseparation issue disqualification of their UI benefits. A one dollar increase in base period wages results in a 1% decrease that an unemployed worker will experience a nonseparation issue disqualification of their UI benefits. Further analyses revealed that older workers and females were more likely to have a nonseparation disqualification because they were not able and ready to work. Younger, male workers were more likely to have a nonseparation disqualification because they did not meet the reporting requirements or they did not register to work.

As in the separation issue model, unemployed workers who applied for UI benefits in the months with the least applicants (i.e., May or September) are 1.66 times more likely than those who applied in the months with the most applicants to have their UI benefits reduced due to a nonseparation issue. In addition, unemployed high education workers are more likely to experience a nonseparation issue disqualification than unemployed workers with low education. A one year increase in educational attainment results in a 7 percent increase in the odds that an unemployed worker will experience a nonseparation issue disqualification of their UI benefits.

Discussion/Conclusion

This research adds to existing poverty literature by documenting sex, race, place, age, and income disparities in unemployment insurance disqualifications in a poor rural state. Several findings from this research support feminist assertions that the UI program is structurally biased against certain workers.
Inequities in Benefits

For example, unemployed West Virginia workers who live in a county outside of a metropolitan area are significantly less likely to meet the monetary qualification for UI insurance than workers within a metropolitan area. This finding is not surprising given that the types of employment that dominate rural and nonmetro areas (i.e., service industries, nondurable manufacturing sectors, agriculture, and resource extraction) are low waged and/or low security employment.

Thus, it appears that many rural workers are engaged in various forms of unpaid, seasonal, or part-time labor which have contributed to the survival of their households but are not covered under the UI program or do not qualify them for benefits. Their lower average earnings make it more difficult for them to meet the minimum earnings requirement (over a two quarter period) for unemployment insurance. The good news for rural workers in West Virginia is that once they monetarily qualify for UI benefits, they are significantly less likely than urban workers to lose benefit payments due to a separation issue or they are no more likely than urban workers to be disqualified due to a nonseparation issue. A similar pattern is found for unemployed workers in counties with high concentrations of farming (i.e., significantly less likely to monetarily qualify, or lose weeks of UI benefits due to a separation issue or nonseparation issue). It is possible that rural workers voluntarily quit, get discharged due to misconduct, or refuse to follow the eligibility criteria (i.e., they are “better behaved”) for UI less often than urban workers because of their more limited employment opportunities.

In addition, unemployed women, people of color, younger workers, and low income workers in West Virginia in 1997 consistently (1) have the most difficult time meeting the monetary requirement for UI benefits, (2) are the most likely to be disqualified from UI benefits because of a separation issue, and (3) are the most likely to have a nonseparation issue disqualification of UI benefits. These findings are particularly troublesome in a postindustrial society where global competition, continued institutionalized occupational and income inequality, and a restructuring of the public assistance program compound the historic problems with distribution programs designed for an industrialized urban society (Schram 1995).
Economic restructuring and welfare reform have made the historical inequities built into the unemployment insurance program more problematic than ever before. The UI system has remained virtually unchanged since its inception in the 1930s (O'Leary 2000). We now live in a postindustrial society where workers attain jobs "that increasingly must be subsidized with supplemental wages, tax credits, or the extension of public assistance benefits if they are to serve as a means of subsistence" (Schram 1995:173). Historically, part-time labor was associated with a weak attachment to the labor market. Today, "the rapid growth in flexible working arrangements has made such an assumption increasingly untenable" (Nicholson 1997:115). The current unemployment insurance program has not adjusted to the transformations in the nation's economy and work force.

The sex, race, age, and income disparities in unemployment insurance disqualifications also indicate big problems for the large number of current and former welfare recipients pushed into the labor market by the welfare reform law of 1996 (PWRORA, the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act of 1996-PL 104-193). Unemployed workers who are denied UI benefits have historically turned to the stigmatized, restrictive social assistance benefits (i.e., AFDC, Food Stamps, and Medicaid) to supplement their insufficient incomes. These programs were "downsized" and restructured in 1996 making this already overtaxed inefficient system an even more limited back-up system to the UI program.

Two specific changes to this system, a lifetime cap on benefits and stiff work requirements for recipients, have the potential to increase the labor force participation of both former and current welfare recipients and thus create stronger connection between the social assistance and social insurance programs (i.e., TANF and UI) (Lare 1999). Unfortunately, researchers have found that only about 13 percent of unemployed people with a history of welfare receipt qualified for UI benefits (Gornick 1999:53). Former welfare recipients have trouble meeting the monetary requirement for UI benefits because many simply do not earn enough money to qualify and "...conditioning UI eligibility on earnings-rather than hours, days, or weeks of employment during the base period discriminates against lower-wage workers" (Gornick 1999:53). Hobbie, Wittenburg, and Fishman (1999)
state that “Former TANF UI beneficiaries will have special needs, such as child care and transportation assistance, that historically have not been addressed by the UI system” (p. 16) but could create more voluntary quits. Another barrier is that “Many recent welfare leavers, especially those with young children, are seeking part-time work, which disqualifies them from UI in most circumstances” (Gornick 1999:49). Hobbie et al. (1999) also document that the “Able to work” qualification for UI benefits can be particularly difficult for adults with disabilities or who are living with a family member with a physical or mental disability. The final barrier to UI benefits is that given their historical exclusion from this program “Many TANF recipients may not understand how the UI system works or how to apply for UI benefits” (Hobbie et al. 1999:16).

The structural limitations of the UI program combined with economic structuring and the rapidly shrinking public assistance safety net place low income individuals in a rural state like West Virginia in a uniquely postmodern economic crunch. Until the unemployment insurance program is transformed to accommodate the part-time, contingent, and self-employed workers who increasingly dominate our postindustrial economy, work force, and welfare system, the unemployment insurance system will continue to re-enforce and legitimate sex, race, and place inequities in employment and income security.

References


Finding and Keeping Affordable Housing: Analyzing the Experiences of Single-Mother Families in North Philadelphia

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The location, availability, and quality of housing shapes one’s social networks, affects access to jobs, and impacts on social relations within the housing unit. However, access to affordable housing is limited for a significant portion of the population in the urban United States. In this study, I interviewed eighteen African-American and Puerto Rican single mothers in two low-income neighborhoods of Philadelphia about how they create and maintain their housing arrangements. Within the constraints of an affordable housing shortage, women told me how they struggle to share housing with others, rehab abandoned properties, live in substandard housing, and remain in unsafe neighborhoods. Though their strategies allow them to currently retain housing, they are not without costs. I discuss these findings using the theoretical framework of social capital.

Keywords: single mothers, single mother families, housing, affordable housing, low-income neighborhoods, HUD

Introduction

In 1999, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimated that 4.9 million families spend more than half of their income on housing or live in sub-standard housing. How do these families, and others just on the edge of affordability, negotiate housing arrangements? Can they find places to live—in an apartment or a house that is not in sub-standard condition, and in a neighborhood in which they feel safe? Are there costs to the type of strategies they use?

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The affordable housing problem is exacerbated for low-income African-American and Latino families who must deal with the additional hurdle of housing discrimination. Compared to white households, they receive poorer-quality housing for the same cost (Stone, 1993). Moreover, researchers have documented that they have limited neighborhood options in which they can secure housing (Massey & Denton, 1993; Rosenbaum, 1996). In 1999, 41% of Latino very low-income renters (without housing assistance and making less than 50% of area median income) faced severe housing affordability problems. Among African-American very low-income renters (without housing assistance), 49% had severe housing affordability problems (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2001).

In this paper, I describe the housing arrangements of African-American and Puerto Rican single mothers in two low-income neighborhoods of Philadelphia. I use qualitative methods, in order to examine the stories behind these numbers I have just cited. We know how many households are unable to afford housing, but we have not documented how they manage to stay off of the streets and out of the shelters. By analyzing qualitative interviews, I find that low-income single mothers rely on several strategies to secure housing. However, though these strategies reduce their housing costs, they come with other individual costs.

Literature Review

Affordable Housing Shortage

Providing suitable and affordable housing for poor families has always been a problem in U.S. cities. Despite the work of housing reformers in the last century, the U.S. has historically depended on the private market to meet the demand for affordable housing (Radford, 1996; Apgar, 1993; Squires, 1994). The market's method of supplying affordable housing operates through a filtering mechanism where units presumably filter down to low-income households. However, unit rent cannot fall below the landlord's cost of maintenance; thus there is a floor beyond which the rent cannot fall. Many units which would be predicted to filter down, are actually upgraded by developers for affluent
households, or demolished for new units, based on the desirability of the neighborhood (Apgar, 1993).

If the market does not find it profitable to provide sufficient amounts of affordable housing, what has been the recent role of the government in filling this need? The federal government dramatically cut back funding for low-income housing assistance in the 1980s. From 1981 to 1988, the Reagan administration cut funding for conventional public housing from $4.2 billion to $573 million, and decreased construction of new additional units from 18,003 to 3,109 (Squires, 1994). Since the early 1990s, local housing authorities, with assistance from HUD through the HOPE VI initiative, have demolished or rehabilitated public housing developments in order to convert sites into mixed-income housing developments. Although some public housing tenants will be accepted back into these new developments, fewer units than original households are being constructed, thus depleting the affordable housing stock (National Housing Law Project, 2002).

Relying on the private sector to meet the housing needs for low-income families without providing sufficient government assistance is a recipe for a continual shortage of affordable housing. For renters with less than 30% of area median income, the number of affordable units dropped by 13% (750,000 units) between 1997-1999. According to the 1999 American Housing Survey, nationwide only 40 units are affordable and available for every 100 households at or below 30% of median income (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2001).

The conventional measure of housing affordability has fluctuated between twenty and thirty percent of a household’s income. This measure is constructed by estimating what households actually pay for housing. Stone (1993) has pointed out that defining housing affordability in this manner is problematic for at least two reasons. First, simply because households, on average, pay a certain percentage of their income for housing costs, does not necessarily mean that they can afford to pay this much. Second, 30% of a household income of $100,000 is different than 30% of a household income of $10,000, in terms of what type of housing can be procured for this amount, and how much income
the household has left to pay for non-shelter costs. Stone has devised a different formula for measuring housing affordability, taking into account household income and household composition. Knowing the income and the composition of a household, one can calculate how much of that income must go toward “non-shelter” costs (food, clothing, etc.). After the minimum costs of these expenditures are taken into account, one is left with how much a family can afford for housing. His “shelter poverty” definition offers a more textured way of looking at the gap in housing affordability. For the purposes of this paper, one of the critical points that the shelter poverty measure highlights is that some families can afford nothing for housing. That is, based on their income and the number of people in their family, their non-shelter costs are such that not enough money is left over to cover housing costs. Stone (1993) claims that a family who receives welfare (AFDC/TANF) can afford nothing for housing, if they are to cover their non-shelter costs at a basic level of adequacy, even taking into account that these families also receive Medicaid and food stamps. But most families on welfare do not live on the street or in homeless shelters. Nor do most receive governmental assistance for housing. How then, do they manage it?

Social Capital

The concept of social capital provides a useful framework for answering this question since low-income individuals may draw on different types of social capital to secure housing. Portes (1998) defines social capital in this way: “social capital stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (p. 6). Social capital is distinct from yet related to human capital and physical capital. While physical capital is in tangible material form, and human capital consists of skills and knowledge, social capital “exists in the relations among persons” (Coleman, 1988, p. S101). For example, a mother who does not have sufficient income for rent may know someone who will allow her and her children to stay with them. Or she may feel safe in a neighborhood with a high crime rate if she has relationships with her neighbors that create a web of perceived security. If low-income women are lacking financial capital, are they able to use social capital
resources to obtain decent housing arrangements and manage their neighborhood environment?

Methods

Researchers have explored housing and urban space using quantitative methods quite extensively. Nonetheless, qualitative data can provide insight into how families obtain and keep housing situations. Listening to people's experiences, and including the full rich texture of their stories in the data analysis allows one to describe, explain, and theorize based on a multi-layered, detailed picture (Franklin, 1990). In this study, qualitative methods allow me to highlight how single mothers are housing agents for themselves and their families, how this agency is constrained by the affordable housing shortage, and what costs their strategies may incur.

This paper addresses the following two questions:
1. What kind of housing arrangements do low-income single mothers create?
2. Are there costs to the strategies they use?

I interviewed eight African-American women and ten Puerto Rican women from two low-income neighborhoods in Philadelphia: Strawberry Mansion and West Kensington (I also refer to it as "Kensington"). Interviewing housed women, as opposed to women in shelters, carries with it a disadvantage and an advantage. Since they currently have housing, it may be likely that I am interviewing women who have more resources than those who are in the shelter system. Nevertheless, it is more difficult to gain access to women in apartments or houses, since they are not in a social service system. Moreover, their methods of staying out of shelters can be useful for policy or programmatic purposes.

I used a mix of recruiting methods to obtain the sample of women. I wanted to focus this research on women of color who face additional structural barriers to housing due to their race and ethnicity, and I also wanted to situate the findings within specific neighborhoods. To this end, I sampled within two neighborhoods that are heavily populated by African-Americans and Puerto Ricans, respectively. I worked through six organizations to find women, and these interviews led to other women not attached to
the organizations. The respondents were either receiving TANF cash assistance or earning wages below $8.50/hour. All of the African-American women in the sample lived in Strawberry Mansion at the time of the interview, and all of them had lived there most of their lives. All of the Puerto Rican women in the sample had lived in West Kensington at one time, and all but two currently lived within the boundaries. The median age was 30 years old for the African-American sample, and it was 25 years old for the Puerto Rican sample.

I nested the housing interviewing instrument into a longer interview guide, since this housing research was conducted within a larger study on parenting and relationships. The interview was semi-structured with open-ended questions and was not followed in the same way every time, since the interview was framed as a conversation. I paid women $25 for the interview, and they chose a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. I taped all of the interviews, and transcribed the housing sections. I interviewed each of the women except for one on two separate occasions, for an average of two hours (total time ranging from 1½-3 hours). I talked to all of the women except for two in their homes. Field notes about the neighborhood and the actual housing (if the interview was conducted at home) provided a context for the interviews. I conducted the interviews from January–March 1999.

This analysis was both deductive and inductive. After transcribing, I began coding the interview transcripts for the broad topics in the interview guide, such as “ways of looking for housing,” and “conflict around sharing.” I then moved to a grounded-theory approach by open-coding all of the transcripts, drawing concepts and patterns from the data, and exploring how patterns are related to one another (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Since this is a small, non-random sample, the findings are meant to serve an exploratory purpose and to highlight patterns that can be studied in a more systematic way for future research on housing strategies. Regardless of these generalization issues, it is important to place these findings in a spatial context.

This research takes place within the context of Philadelphia’s housing market. Specific housing needs may differ across regions, but the proportion of very low-income renters who lack housing assistance and are paying more than half of their income for
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housing costs is virtually the same in all four regions of the United States. Similar to other regions, 47% of unassisted very low-income renters had severe housing problems in the Northeast in 1999. However, variations in housing costs exist even within the Northeast region. The major cities in the Northeast have Fair Market Rents for a 2-bedroom unit that range from $661 (Baltimore), $755 (Philadelphia), $949 (New York City), and $979 (Boston) (National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 2001). By this measure, Philadelphia's housing costs are toward the lower end of this Northeast range.

Findings

Neighborhood Indicators

In order to place the following qualitative findings in a spatial context, Table 1 displays basic indicators for these two neighborhoods. (I averaged together the census tracts that commonly constitute these two neighborhoods for the table estimates.) Both neighborhoods were assessed below 50% of the median housing value for Philadelphia as a whole. Can poor families find affordable housing in Philadelphia's least expensive neighborhoods? In Pennsylvania, the maximum welfare grant for a family of three with no income at all was $403 a month in 1999. The median rent in West Kensington in 1999 ranged between $413–$507 and the median rent in Strawberry Mansion ranged between $373–$478. Thus, even in poor neighborhoods, families who receive welfare must create strategies for housing, as their income does not cover basic rent.

Comparing the average shelter costs (including rent or mortgage, gas, electric, and water), I find that on average, the African-American respondents who lived in Strawberry Mansion paid less in shelter costs ($269/month) than the Puerto Rican respondents in West Kensington ($407/month). Thus the women interviewed in Strawberry Mansion managed to secure housing well below the median rent (assessed in 1999) in their neighborhood, while the Puerto Rican women were paying slightly below the median rent in their neighborhood. The African-American women in the sample were more likely to be working and thus had a higher income than the Puerto Rican women, since most of
Table 1

*Housing and demographic characteristics for West Kensington, Strawberry Mansion, and Philadelphia, 2000*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>W. Kensington</th>
<th>Strawberry Mansion</th>
<th>Philadelphia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Latino</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
<td>.007%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median gross rent</td>
<td>$413 – 507</td>
<td>$373 – $478</td>
<td>$569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median housing value</td>
<td>$15,200 –</td>
<td>$19,800 –</td>
<td>$59,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$27,300</td>
<td>$28,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% persons below poverty</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2000 Census

them relied on cash assistance from welfare. As a result, the Puerto Rican respondents in the sample needed to find more funding to fill the gap between their income and their housing costs. The findings below describe strategies women used to secure housing in their different neighborhood contexts.

**Housing Strategies**

**Sharing**

By far, the most common method of securing housing for both groups of women was sharing housing with mothers, boyfriends, or others. All of the women in the study lived with their mothers at some point after the birth of their first child. Mothers served as an early source of housing and these women cycled in and out of their mothers’ households as their children aged. Currently, nearly half of the respondents are sharing housing.

Most of the women described their sharing experiences, past and present, as fairly crowded and otherwise undesirable. Being highly dependent on the main tenant for continued shelter can cause one to feel it is not really one’s home. This dependency means that women may endure treatment that they would otherwise be able to avoid. When Elizabeth was pregnant with her first son, she left her boyfriend because he was cheating on her and she moved into her parents’ house in Kensington. Her stepfather had been physically and emotionally abusive as she was growing up,
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I struggled a lot. I had no income, I had no man backing me up, I was back in my parents’ house. He [her ex-boyfriend] made me go to my father. ‘Cause he knew I had nowhere to go, and I had to stay at his house. For a couple times I was off and on, house to house. I was at my mother’s house for a little while, and my brother’s house, because my father was really making me go through hell. Like, okay I had to take his shit, cause I was in his house and I was pregnant. So, I went through it . . . It was hard.

Sharing housing often results in crowded conditions. Aliya, who is 27 years old and works as a caterer, currently lives in a three-bedroom Strawberry Mansion house with her mother, her younger brother, her cousin and her three children, and her 9 year-old son. This level of crowding can heighten tension in a house, and many of the respondents recounted stories of conflict and negotiation of space. Most of the conflict surrounded different styles of childrearing and household management. Aliya told me about two sources of conflict around childrearing—her parents, and her cousin’s children:

I don’t want my mother raising my son, I don’t want my father raising my son, nobody. Because you live under the same roof with somebody, they’re going to try to raise him their way . . . [I tell my son] when you come in the house, you hang up your coat, put up your bookbag. And if you’re living with other people’s kids, and they put their stuff on the floor, I mean, how can you tell your son to hang his stuff up?

Women who double up in other people’s households often help out within the shared household by making contributions with their cash assistance, food stamps, earned income, or by assisting with child or elder care. Conflict around household management issues can be further exacerbated by the scarce resources that people are drawing from while sharing. Stephanie allowed people to stay with her when she and two of her three children were living in an apartment in Kensington. She and a girlfriend who lived with her were living on cash assistance, food stamps, and a portion of Stephanie’s estranged husband’s SSI check. She
also had problems living with her husband's brother, as he was depleting their food supply and not contributing financially:

It was hard because she [her friend] wanted to help, but she didn't want to help at the same time, she only wanted to share a certain part of her income, and keep the rest for herself. She also received DPA [welfare]. Like she would give me $75-100 in food stamps for food, and then the rest she would cash in. So that was another problem, why she had to leave. And before he [her separated husband] moved out, his brother had moved in and he was like taking over my kids' food and stuff like that. He would make a large amount of food and then tell my kids it's not enough for them. Or he would go into their little munchies, like cookies and doughnuts, he would eat it, and there wouldn't be enough for my kids . . .

Finding and keeping "independent" housing

What are other options for low-income women aside from doubling up? How do they secure their own place? Women must frequently be creative and/or settle for housing that fails to meet their standards. Family contacts with landlord friends helped some of the women find apartments and houses. Sometimes family members owned multiple houses and women were able to live in a family-owned house without sharing with another household. Carmen, a mother of four, was feeling unsafe at her apartment in the heart of the Kensington Latino business strip because she continually found the door to her apartment open. She moved into her cousin's house in the same neighborhood, but off of the business strip. She told me: "I just moved in here, without even giving no deposit, or without asking. 'Cause it's my cousin's house, and I have the keys and I just moved in, cause I was getting scared, being over at that place."

Only one-third of the sample conducted a more "formal" housing search using typical sources such as newspapers or real estate agencies. However, a third of the Puerto Rican sample told me they could not use these formal routes for securing housing because their credit would not stand up under a credit check.

The respondents discussed their struggle to manage their limited financial resources and the impact this financial hardship had on keeping their own place. Sometimes they had to make hard choices between paying rent or paying utility bills. When Nancy
lived on a virtually abandoned block in Kensington with her two children, her landlord refused to make repairs and frequently did not pay the water bill (for which the landlord was responsible):

One month I had to pay the rent late, because they were going to cut my water off. So I had to put some of the rent money toward that so I wouldn't get my water cut off... How could I cook for [my kids], and give them a bath and everything? I said, I can't do that to my kids. [Did she want to evict you?] Yeah. She wanted to throw me out. She said, 'you didn't pay me the whole rent.'

None of the sample received any kind of federal housing assistance; instead, family and boyfriends provided the bulk of assistance to the sample for their housing needs. This is not surprising since nationwide, only one-third of welfare recipients lived in public or subsidized housing in 1997–1998 (U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means, 2000). The respondents told me they never considered Section 8 vouchers or certificates as an option, since they believed they would have to either wait several years or move their families into a shelter in order to access the aid. A few women have had positive experiences with social services and government programs outside of federally-subsidized housing. Christina, a homeowner who lives on a TANF cash assistance grant, has been resourceful in using all the programs she can find to improve her house on a small street in Kensington and keep up with the bills.

**Owning a home**

Within this context of an affordable housing shortage, can home ownership work as a strategy for obtaining housing? Almost half of the African-American sample inherited their houses from their mothers. Two Puerto Ricans became homeowners by taking over houses that the owners wanted to dispose of. Both of the houses were in extremely poor shape and significant rehabilitation work was needed to make them habitable. Mariah and her boyfriend found their house through a local storeowner. The house had been divided into rooms for rent, so they needed to demolish several walls and put up new sheet rock in order to re-design the house for one family. The bathrooms also needed to be re-done since they were in such a deteriorated state. Alexia
became a homeowner through a similar informal connection. Her boyfriend's stepfather gave them a house, on the condition that they pay off a back-water bill of $900. She estimates that they spent about $6,000 on repairs to the house over the last three years. Alexia and her boyfriend wash dishes in the bathtub now and use a hotplate, since the kitchen has been unusable for two months. Using his parents' kitchen down the block has created conflict and tension between the two households.

Sometimes, the attempts at owning a home fail. Maria and her boyfriend fixed up two houses, one of which they squatted in and lost at a Sheriff's Sale, which is another way of securing cheap housing:

We fixed the bathroom, they didn't have no tub or toilet . . . We put sheet rock in [the middle room] cause the walls were messed up . . . Pipers [crack addicts] and drug people had been in the house. They go in the house if nobody is living there, and then it gets dirty—ooh, it was so nasty. There were big rats, oh my God! I didn't want my girls bitten by these rats . . . We had to re-do the whole kitchen. My brother was working cleaning buildings out, so he gave me a refrigerator, and old cabinets.

"Costs" of Housing Strategies

*Sub-standard housing*

Since low-income women are forced by poverty to operate on the fringes of the housing market, they frequently must accept housing that is in extremely poor condition, and is below the standards they define as acceptable for their children. According to the 1985 American Housing Survey, 40% of rental units in the poorest central city zones of Philadelphia were physically inadequate (Turner & Edwards, 1993). Sometimes the sub-standard housing conditions are accepted as temporary circumstances that can be repaired, especially in the case of women who move into virtually abandoned houses in order to eventually gain ownership. When I asked Mariah, a mother of two, if she knew what the house in Kensington was like when she and her boyfriend moved in to purchase it, she answered,

No, no. We just looked at the price, and we said, 'this is a good deal, let's do it.' We didn't know how it looked like. It was terrible, oh my
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God . . . the bathrooms were terrible. The bathrooms were black . . . I guess the people that were living there had never cleaned . . . When I used to turn on the stove, all of these roaches would come out. It was so disgusting. And then I didn’t want to eat the food I was cooking . . . My yard, behind it, it’s all empty lots and I guess people be throwing their trash there. And all that brings mice and rats and things like that.

Half of the women (all but two of these were Puerto Rican) told me about substandard conditions under which they and their children had to live. Most of these women related how their landlord refused to fix needed repairs. In these cases, women frequently sought help from the Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections (L & I). Although an inspector would come and duly take note of the conditions, the landlord still would refuse to make the necessary repairs. The women were then left with the equally undesirable choice of finding different housing in their price range or remaining in a sub-standard unit.

Neighborhood conditions

A discussion of urban low-income women’s housing situations is not complete without examining their neighborhoods, at least superficially. Common themes, with some differences between the two groups of women, were woven throughout their descriptions of their neighborhoods. Both groups of women were concerned about their neighborhood environment. They worried about the public drinking and drug sales their children witnessed on their streets, and they worried about the violence which often erupted on their blocks.

However, respondents told me that they are forced to endure poor neighborhood conditions when they can only afford apartments with very cheap rent. As a result, they end up putting their children in circumstances that they perceive to be dangerous for them. Stephanie cannot afford to remain in her current house, so she is looking for an apartment back in her old Kensington neighborhood, from which she moved recently:

Right now the Northeast is more expensive, so I’m thinking of going back down North [to Kensington]. I know it’s more dangerous down there, and there’s more drug activities, and more violence, but I guess as long as I don’t let my kids be around it . . . I know it’s not
a good area for me, you know, for me to take my kids down to that area, but if I have no other choice, I have to do it. You know, I'll just have to keep a better look-out for my kids, make sure nothing's jumpin' off in front of our place.

Just as economic circumstances are compelling Stephanie to move back to Kensington, similar constraints trap low-income women in neighborhoods from which they desperately want to move to escape the violence. Homeowners, as well as tenants, are trapped in this situation: if a homeowner's mortgage is paid off, she no longer makes monthly payments. It would be extremely difficult for her to move to a better neighborhood, because the chances of selling her house may be minimal. In their analysis of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, South and Crowder (1998) found that home ownership inhibits residential mobility from a poor neighborhood to a more affluent neighborhood, for precisely this reason.

Christina, who believes bad influences in her Kensington neighborhood are responsible for her 20 year-old son being imprisoned, faced this problem:

I didn't have no chance to get out of here when they were small—this was mine, and it was paid off, and I said, wait a minute, if I sell this house and I move on, I'm going to have to pay [on a] mortgage. Since I was by myself, I didn't have no help.

When one finds that living in a given neighborhood is intolerable, moving out of the neighborhood is one solution. However, since many women thought this option was closed for them, several described how they simply stayed inside their house in order to avoid the violence, drug dealing, and public drunkenness. Renee lives across the street from an entire vacant block in Kensington, where a factory once stood before it was burned down four years ago. She told me, "I don't really know too much about this neighborhood, I just stay inside my house. I don't really be outside that much, so . . . Nobody bothers me, so. You know everybody stick to they ownself." Half of the Puerto Rican women told me that they took this route, yet none of the African-American women described self-isolation such as this. Unfortunately, when responsible people begin staying inside and disassociating themselves from their neighbors because of a fear of the neighborhood,
In contrast to the Puerto Rican respondents, African-Americans often described how their neighborhood was safer than it would have been because of "a second eye" and because "everybody knows everybody." When asked what she liked about her neighborhood, Aliya said, "That I know everybody. The neighbors looks out for everybody else's child. So I have a second eye. That's basically it . . ." This example of managing relations with neighbors highlights a difference in how women dealt with the cost of living in difficult neighborhoods.

Discussion and Conclusion

These findings offer an insight into the types of housing arrangements low-income women construct as they attempt to bridge the gap between their income and shelter costs in two of Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods. Poor women's housing strategies partially depend on their ability to draw on social capital resources. When women are embedded in a network of people on whom they can make claims for resources, they have more strategies available to them. The findings in this research reflect instrumental support, one type of social capital. These women were able to draw on their relationships for instrumental support, such as knowledge about home repair, and access to inexpensive or free housing. The current housing situations of the two groups of women reflect the different instrumental social capital resources that they had at their disposal. Most of the African-American women were either living with a member of their nuclear family or living in their mother's house without paying rent or mortgage. In contrast, most of the Puerto Rican women were much more likely to be living in a rehabbed house or living in a place heavily subsidized by a boyfriend or separated husband.

Looking at how women gain ownership of housing offers an example of how differences in instrumental social capital may
affect housing strategies. Some Puerto Rican women repaired virtually uninhabitable houses that they secured through kin and non-kin connections, and subsequently owned these homes; whereas the African-American women who owned their homes did so because the house was originally owned by their mothers. Perhaps African-American women in Strawberry Mansion 20–30 years ago were more financially able to purchase a home than Puerto Rican women. Over half of the owner-occupied houses in one of the Strawberry Mansion tracts are owned by someone 55 years or older. In contrast, fewer than half of the owner-occupied houses in all of the West Kensington tracts are owned by someone 55 years or older (Bartelt & Shlay, 1995). The Puerto Rican mothers of these women may not have owned homes because they lived in Puerto Rico most of their lives, although all of the women in the sample except for two were born in the mainland United States.

Affordable housing units in cities are often located in neighborhoods that are not desirable to the general populace. Whether one feels connected with local networks or the larger community affects the costs of living in an undesirable neighborhood. Clear distinctions between the two groups of women arose around their perceptions of their neighborhoods. Puerto Rican women frequently used a “self-isolation” strategy to deal with the violence and the other negative influences in their neighborhoods. They tried to prevent their children from playing with the neighborhood children, especially those they perceived as “thugs.” These risk-management parenting strategies have been documented by other researchers, and are often associated with positive outcomes for children growing up in poor neighborhoods (Furstenberg, 1993; Jarrett, 1997).

Even though African-American mothers told me they were concerned for their children’s safety, they were more likely to also tell me that neighbors on their block offered a “second eye” by watching out for other’s children. In contrast to women who grew up in West Kensington, women who grew up in Strawberry Mansion described a positive neighborhood past, peppered with frequent block parties, organized by strong block captains, and filled with cooperating neighbors. While their memories may be tainted with nostalgia, the difference between the two groups is striking.
Are there differences in social capital resources in the two neighborhoods, that are related to the two opposing strategies of "self-isolation" and "second eye"? A "self-isolation" strategy may protect one's household, but it also lessens the likelihood of establishing relations among the neighborhood. Although the Puerto Rican respondents feared that these relations would have a negative influence on their families, their isolation strategy prevented any opportunity of forming constructive relationships. In Strawberry Mansion, neighbors watching out for one another, with a "second eye," may be both a result and a cause of increased connectedness in the neighborhood, offering more opportunities for building relationships.

The key factor shaping the housing strategies of women in this study appears to be a connection to social capital resources that are instrumental in securing and retaining housing. Furthermore, the perception of neighborhood-level cohesiveness or norms similar to one's own reflects another type of social capital resource that may affect the level of costs of living in a dangerous neighborhood. It is difficult to disentangle the possible cultural and structural factors that play into how women find and keep housing, and how they manage their neighborhood environments. However, the concept of social capital provides a useful way of making sense of the data, and it also can serve as a starting point for future research on this topic.

Clearly, the sample of women in this study is too small to generalize from; nevertheless, their stories offer patterns that can be used in further research on this topic. Additionally, each city has a unique housing stock and market which affects individual's housing strategies. Future research should enlarge the sample size, and include different cities in order to assess the variations in housing strategies that low-income families use within a context of limited affordable housing.

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Early Education Experiences &
School-to-Work Program Participation

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This study assesses the effects of Head Start participation and demonstrated academic ability during elementary school on School-to-Work (STW) program participation. The study sample comes from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1997 Cohort and comprises 4,370 adolescents who reported grades they received while in the 8th grade and whether or not they ever repeated a grade in grammar school. Findings indicate that STW programs attract disproportionate numbers of students with histories of marginal demonstrated academic ability. This is so because STW programs are also more likely to attract Head Starters. Demonstrated academic ability varies by race/ethnicity and sex, with lower participation rates by white males. The author suggests that efforts to achieve a more heterogeneous racial/ethnic mix of students to take advantage of school-to-work based initiatives would strengthen such programs. In doing so, such efforts would increase the prospects of Head Start participants entering the mainstream of socioeconomic life in the US more easily than would be the case otherwise. In addition, such efforts would make the US workforce more competitive in an increasingly global economy.

Keywords: Head Start, School-to-Work initiatives, economically disadvantaged adolescents

This study assesses the effects of Head Start participation and demonstrated academic ability during elementary school on STW program participation. It takes into account gender and race/ethnicity, and, to a lesser extent, later socioeconomic status. The study sample comes from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1997 Cohort and comprises 4,370 adolescents who reported grades they received while in the 8th grade and whether or
not they ever repeated a grade in grammar school. At issue here is the extent to which STW programs attract students from less diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and with roughly similar academic experiences while in elementary school.

This issue is important given that proponents of STW programs sought to appeal to all high school students, and thereby ensure a greater likelihood of academic rigor when linking workplace experience with school-based instruction. These objectives would be thwarted if STW programs were more likely to attract students primarily from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds or with poor histories of demonstrated academic ability, or if such programs catered primarily to women. This is so in part because teachers often expect less of students they perceive as academically marginal, or as more likely to occupy positions in the secondary tier of the labor market, or as less likely to pursue life-long careers in the labor market. It is also so in part because programs that cater to such students often lack the level of resources of other programs. Further, to the extent such programs appeal to lower socioeconomic students, they may also be perceived as a program for the poor. Programs that target poor individuals and families in the U.S. often lack the levels of bipartisan support and public resources as those that benefit broader socioeconomic segments of the population.

Background of Head Start and STW Programs

Created in 1965, Head Start seeks to enhance behavioral, emotional, and cognitive capacities of young children from economically disadvantaged families (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). It still enjoys popular support and is up for renewal in 2003. Enacted in 1994, the School to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) sought to provide all adolescents opportunities to earn transferable credits, to prepare for first jobs in high-skill careers, and to pursue further education (Harmon, 2000; Imel, n.d.). Federal funding for STWOA ceased as of January 3, 2002.

Head Start is perhaps one of the most extensively written about compensatory education programs in the U.S. Much of the related literature about its purpose, use, implementation, and effects are explored and summarized elsewhere (e.g., Caputo,
Early Education & STW Programs

1998; Currie, 2001; Karoly, Kilburn, Bigelow, Caulkins, & Cannon, 2001). Briefly, as Epstein (1992) notes, Head Start offers children from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to develop healthy learning habits before they entered primary school. Early studies suggest that compensatory education makes little difference in later student achievement (e.g., Stanley, 1973). Subsequent findings show, however, that children who pursue such a program demonstrate gains in human capital. They score higher on intelligence and achievement measures, have better achievement self-images, and receive more encouragement from parents. These effects also carry over through adolescence (e.g., Oden, Schweinhart, & Weikart, et al., 2000).

STWOA established a national framework within which states and communities could develop School-To-Work Opportunities systems to prepare young people for first jobs and for continuing education (Olson, 1997). Nothing in STWOA philosophy suggested that it was intended for only those students who planned to work immediately after high school. STW programs were intended to provide students with a high school diploma (or its equivalent), a nationally recognized skill certificate, or an associate degree (if appropriate) that could lead to a first job or further education (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). By the fall of 1997, 34 of 37 grantee states had formed 1,106 STWOA partnerships, including 83% of their secondary school districts. Funding levels were relatively modest, however, with local grants averaging $25,000 per school district or $4.32 per student (Hershey, Silverberg, Haimson, Hudis, & Jackson, 1999).

STWOA adhered to the educational philosophy of John Dewey (1916 & 1977). Dewey rejected vocational education as training for specific trades. Instead, he supported education through occupations as the most powerful way to acquire practical knowledge, apply academic content, and critically examine industrial and societal values (Law, Knuth, & Bergman, 1992). Critics of STWOA raised many of the same concerns that Dewey initially did. In particular they charged that STWOA takes the interests of students and makes them subservient to the interests of employers (Grubb, 1995). Other critics rejected the contemporary application of Dewey's pedagogical approach to education. They claimed it lacked academic rigor and placed too much emphasis
on learning to do and insufficient attention on leaning to know (Patterson, 1998). Regardless of operating philosophy, however, policies and programs linking education and work have become commonplace in many industrial countries such as England, Germany, Australia, Denmark, and The Netherlands (Raffe, 2003).

Research Objectives and Related Literature Review

As noted, this study assesses the effects of Head Start participation and demonstrated academic ability during elementary school on STW program participation. At issue in part is the relationship between participation in a publicly sponsored early education program that targets children from economically disadvantaged families and participation in a publicly sponsored secondary education program that appeals to broader socioeconomic segments of the U.S. population. How does early participation of children from economically disadvantaged families affect the likelihood of later participation in publicly sponsored and more broadly targeted education programs? Also at issue here is the extent to which STW programs attract students from less diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and with roughly similar academic experiences while in elementary school. This issue is important given that proponents of STW programs sought to appeal to all high school students, thereby ensuring a greater likelihood of academic rigor when linking workplace experience with school-based instruction than they perceived would be the case otherwise. Further, a more heterogeneous group of STW participants fit well with notions of workforce preparedness in an increasingly global economy that requires sensitivity to those from diverse backgrounds. These objectives would be thwarted if STW programs were more likely to attract, for example, students from more homogeneous racial and ethnic backgrounds or with poor histories of demonstrated academic ability.

Opponents of STW programs feared that such programs might lure brighter students to enroll in less academically rigorous curricula than would be the case otherwise. It is commonplace that there is a positive relationship between the academic caliber of students and rigor of curricular, with the better students more likely to enroll in more rigorous curricula. The likelihood of ob-
aining the level of academic rigor proponents of STW programs hoped for is thereby diminished to the extent that STW programs disproportionately enroll poorer academic performers.

These issues are important in light of longstanding but nonetheless contemporary debates about efficiency and equity as competing goals of public policy. As Lewis (1994) notes, some seek ways to make schooling more overtly relevant to economic prosperity, an efficiency rationale. Others seek ways of augmenting the human capital of children and adolescents from economically disadvantaged families by increasing the likelihood that they more successfully negotiate the labor market than might be the case otherwise, an equity rationale. This study is concerned primarily with equity as a manifest function of academic-vocational policies. It is based on the empirically tested and partially corroborated assumption that costs associated with public investments to improve human capital can be offset by gains in both organizational productivity and economic prosperity in the long run (Saul, 1998). Neumark and Joyce (2001), however, report that the existing research basis for the conclusion that STW programs improve labor market outcomes is weak. Much of the research is primarily anecdotal, reflecting the interests of government-sponsored agencies or advocacy groups of differing political persuasions (Dembicki, 1998; Guest, 2000; National Employer Leadership Council, 1999).

An eight-state STW study by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. indicated that school curriculum (such as career majors and integrating academic and career instruction) had a lower priority than career development (career awareness courses, career development units in other courses), or workplace activities (job shadowing) (Hershey, Hudis, Silverberg, & Haimson, 1997). This finding also held in the more comprehensive national evaluation of STW programs among high school seniors in the class of 1996 (Hershey, Silverberg, Haimson, Hudis, & Jackson, 1999). In the thirty-four states studied nationally, no differences were found between students who completed a college-prep curriculum and those who did not, even when controlling for class rank, attendance, or entry to college. Neither the eight-state nor national study by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. had comparison groups. Hence, differences between STW participants and
non-participants could not be determined. The study presented here in part overcomes these limitations.

Specifically, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the likelihood that STW programs attract students who had lower grades in grammar school?
2. To what extent do STW programs attract students who had enrolled in Head Start and who also had lower grades in grammar school?
3. How do Head Start participation and later socioeconomic status affect STW participation?
4. How do sex and race/ethnicity affect the likelihood of STW participation by demonstrated academic ability?

Answers to these questions will further our understanding of the use and consequences of programs targeting children from economically disadvantaged families and those intended for broader socioeconomic segments of adolescents in the U.S. Merton (1968) suggests that an examination of latent functions of social processes often reveal departures from manifest intentions and goals that policymakers and advocates of specific programs promote. If poor academic performers participate in STW programs disproportionately policymakers will know that a manifest objective of increasing the likelihood of ensuring rigor in school-to-work curricula faces a formidable obstacle. Teachers may be more likely to lower standards to retain students rather than challenge students and risk higher drop out rates than could be the case otherwise. If sex and race/ethnicity further skew the distribution of STW participation beyond that of academic performance, then the appeal to all high school students is not being met. Such a result would further decrease the likelihood of ensuring academic rigor and of achieving the related goal of workforce preparedness.

Methods

Data and Study Sample

Data are from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), a nationally representative sample of 8,984 young men and women 12 to 16 years of age as of December 31, 1996. Documentation about the sampling can be found in the NLS
Handbook 2000 (Center for Human Resource Research, 2000a) and the NLSY97 User's Guide (Center for Human Resource Research, 2000b). The study sample comprises 4,370 adolescents who reported grades they received while in the 8th grade and whether or not they ever repeated a grade in grammar school. As noted below, a subset of the study sample comprises 2,963 adolescents whose responding parents at the time of the 1997 survey reported income from wages, salaries, commissions, or tips from all jobs held in calendar year 1996.

Measures

Adolescents enrolled in the 9th through 12th grade at the time of the 1999 survey who reported that they participated in a school-based learning program since the date of their last interview were classified as STW participants. An adolescent whose responding parent reported that his or her child had participated in Head Start was classified as a Head Start participant. Adolescents were then assigned into one of four program participation groups: Head Start and STW participants, Head Start only participants, STW only participants, or neither Head Start nor STW participants. They were also classified by grade such that 1 = upper level (11th & 12th grade) and 0 = lower level (9th & 10th grade). This division was done in part to control for maturation. In addition, upper level high school students were viewed as having different biases since they face more imminent decisions regarding how best to prepare for either the work force or continuing education upon graduation.

Adolescents were also stratified by school auspices such that 1 = public and 0 = private. For purposes of bivariate analyses, sex and race/ethnicity were combined to create discrete categories of Black Males, Hispanic Males, White Males, Black Females, Hispanic Females, and White Females. For purposes of multivariate analyses described below, race and sex were combined to create a series of dummy variables: white male = 1 and 0 = other, black male = 1 and 0 = other, Hispanic male = 1 and 0 = other, white female = 1 and 0 = other, black female = 1 and 0 = other, and Hispanic female = 1 and 0 = other. The types of curricula in which adolescents were enrolled at the time of survey were College Prep, Academic and Vocational Education Combined, General Program, and Vocational.
Two measures were used to determine demonstrated academic ability in grammar school, namely Grades and Repeat Grade. Respondents were asked what grades they received overall in the 8th grade. The measure Grades was coded such that 1 = Mostly B's or Better and 0 = Mostly C's or Worse. Respondents were also asked if they ever repeated a grade. Repeat Grade was coded such that those who reported that they repeated at least one grade in elementary school = 1, while others = 0.

Finally, on a subset of the study sample (n = 2,963), the measure Parental Wages comprised income in dollars from wages, salaries, commissions, or tips from all jobs that responding parents reported at the time of the 1997 survey for calendar year 1996. The measure Low Income Family was coded such that responding parents whose reported wage income fell within the lowest quintile of wage earners (at or below $7,000 for calendar year 1996) = 1 and those whose wages fell in higher quintiles = 0. The measures Parental Wages and Low Income Family were used to assess the extent to which Head Start participation can serve as a proxy for future economic disadvantage. In addition they were used to assess the relationship between parents' earnings and adolescents' enrollment in STW programs. These assessments were deemed necessary to gain additional insight into how Head Start and later socioeconomic status were likely to affect STW participation. Lucas (1999) showed, for example, that the more proactive role that middle class parents take in their children's education confers academic advantages beyond those accounted for by race, ethnicity, and prior achievement.

Differences in STW participation by socioeconomic status would signify the extent and direction of influence that more affluent parents were likely to exert on their children's decision to enroll in such programs. To the extent STW programs are perceived or stigmatized as less rigorous, then adolescents from more affluent families would be less likely to participate in STW programs than those who participated in Head Start programs or whose parents reported low wage-related income.

Procedures

Chi-square analysis is used to assess bivariate relationships between nominal level measures. The Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel
procedure is used with the chi-square statistic and its related
$p$-value to obtain the odds ratio (Cody & Smith, 1997). Simple
regression analysis is used to determine how Head Start par-
ticipation affects later wage-related earnings of adolescents’ re-
sponding parents. Simple logistic regression analysis is used to
determine if Head Start participation is a predictor of living in a
low-income family and if living in a low-income family is a good
predictor of STW participation.

Multiple logistic regression analysis is used to determine
if Head Start participation and demonstrated academic per-
formance in grammar school are robust predictors of STW par-
ticipation when controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, class level,
curriculum type, and school auspices. For the sex/race/ethnicity
dummy variables, the reference category is white males. For cur-
riculum type, the reference category is College Prep. Correlates
are grouped into two models. Model A or the Main Effects Model
comprises all measures except Head Start participation, Grades,
and Repeat Grade. Model B or the Expanded Model includes
measures in Model A and adds Head Start participation, Grades,
and Repeat Grade. The residual score statistic, $Q_{RS}$ (Breslow &
Day, 1980; Stokes, Davis, & Koch, 1995), is used to determine
what if any effects Head Start participation had on Model A
overall, as well as on individual measures of Model A. Ordinarily,
a Main Effects Model fits adequately when the $Q_{RS}$ statistic fails
to meet statistical significance with a $p$-value $< .05$. In addition,
the $-2$ Log Likelihood statistic is used to compare models, with
lower values signifying a more desirable model (SAS Institute
Inc., 1990). Finally, the Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness-of-Fit
Test is used to assess how well the data fit the Expanded Models, a
good fit signified by higher $p$-values (Cody & Smith, 1997; Stokes,
Davis, & Koch, 1995).

Results

Head Start, Elementary School Performance, and Race/Ethnicity

Of the 4,370 high school students who provided information
about demonstrated academic ability in grammar school, 1,627
(26.7\%) participated in STW programs. Adolescents who earned
grades of B or better in the 8th grade were less likely to participate
in STW programs than were those who reported grades of C or less (25.1% of 2,373 vs. 28.6% of 1,997, $\chi^2 = 7.06, p < .01$). Head Start participation and race/ethnicity, however, were found to account for this difference. Adolescents who earned grades of B or better in the 8th grade were as likely to participate only in STW programs as were those who reported grades of C or less (20.1% vs. 20.3%). Those who had participated in Head Start and who earned B's or better in the 8th grade were less likely to participate in STW programs than were those who reported grades of C or less (5.0% vs. 8.3%, $\chi^2 = 98.64, p < .001$).

Adolescents who repeated a grade in grammar school were as likely to participate in STW programs as those who did not (27.9% of 537 vs. 26.5% of 3,833). This aggregate finding, however, concealed differences in STW participation by the academic ability measure Repeat Grade when controlling for Head Start participation. Grade repeaters in general were less likely to enroll in STW programs than those who did not repeat a grade (15.8% vs. 20.8%), but grade repeaters who had been in Head Start were more likely to enroll in STW programs (12.1% vs. 5.7%, $\chi^2 = 75.00, p < .001$).

White males comprised 29.5% of the adolescents in the study sample ($n = 4,370$). White male adolescents who earned grades of B or better in the 8th grade were less likely to participate in STW programs than were those who reported grades of C or less (18.9% of 719 vs. 27.6% of 568, $\chi^2 = 13.74, p < .001$). White females comprised 26.4% of the adolescents in the study sample. White female adolescents who earned grades of B or better in the 8th grade were also less likely to participate in STW programs than those who reported grades of C or less (23.2% of 797 vs. 30.4% of 355, $\chi^2 = 6.73, p < .01$). No differences of the effects of Grades on STW participation were found for black males ($n = 557$), Hispanic males ($n = 410$), black females ($n = 549$), or Hispanic females ($n = 415$). Black female adolescents who repeated a grade in grammar school were more likely to participate in STW programs than were those who did not repeat a grade (40.1% of 89 vs. 35.9% of 460, $\chi^2 = 4.07, p < .05$). No differences of the effects of Repeat Grade on STW participation were found for any other sex/race/ethnicity group.
Head Start, Later Socioeconomic Status, and STW Participation

A total of 2,963 responding parents reported wage-related income in survey year 1997 for the previous calendar year 1996. Regression analysis indicated that the parents whose adolescent children had participated in Head Start earned an average of $5,876 less in 1996 than those whose adolescent children had not attended Head Start (SE = 824.9, $t$ = -7.12, $p < .001$). Adolescents who had been enrolled in Head Start were also more likely to reside with parents who reported wages for 1996 at or below $7,000, the cutoff for the lowest 20% of wage earners, than were adolescents who had not participated in Head Start (24.8% vs. 19.8%, $\chi^2 = 6.47$, $p < .01$). Adolescents who resided with low-income responding parents in survey year 1997, however, were as likely to participate in STW programs as those who resided with higher wage earning parents (25.5% vs. 26.7%).

Head Start and Academic Ability as Predictors of STW Participation

As can be seen in Table 1, the Main Effects Model met statistical significance, signifying that it did not fit the data adequately and that one or more of the omitted measures (Head Start, Grades, Repeat Grade) were robust predictors of STW participation. As evidenced in the Expanded Model, the only measure that added to the explanatory power of the model was Head Start. Adolescents who were Head Starters as children were nearly 1.3 times as likely to enroll in high school STW programs than those who had not been Head Starters when controlling for race, sex, school auspices, class level, and curriculum type. Neither Grades nor Repeat Grade met the statistical cut-off criterion level of .05 to enter the model.

The relative influence of other characteristics remained basically unchanged with the addition of Head Start participation to the Main Effects Model. That is, black males, black females, and white females were each about 1.3 to 1.7 times more likely than white males to participate in STW programs, as were upper classmen (Odds = 1.5) and those who attended public schools (Odds = 1.5). In addition, those who were enrolled in a Vocational curriculum (Odds = 3.1) or in an Academic/Vocational curriculum (Odds = 2.6) were also more likely to participate in STW programs than those enrolled in a College Prep curriculum.
Table 1

Standardized Estimates (STB), Standard Errors (SE), and Odds Ratios of STW Program Participation of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Characteristics</th>
<th>Main Effects Model</th>
<th>Expanded Model</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STB</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic ability</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades (1=B or better)</td>
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<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat Grade (1=yes)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start (1=yes)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/ethnicity/sex</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>White male</td>
<td>.070**</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic male</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White female</td>
<td>.052***</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black female</td>
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<td>.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic female</td>
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<td>.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class level (1=upper level)</td>
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<td>.073</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum type</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic / vocational</td>
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<td>.147</td>
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<tr>
<td>General program</td>
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<td>.079</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
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<td>.138</td>
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<tr>
<td>School auspices (1=public)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relative Risk</strong></td>
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<td>$Q_{RS}$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$-2 \log L$</td>
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<td>Hosmer &amp; Lemeshow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goodness-of-Fit test</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

Discussion

This study addressed four issues: the likelihood that STW programs attract students with poorer academic ability when they were in grammar school, the likelihood such programs attract students who had enrolled in Head Start and who did poorly in grammar school, how Head Start participation and later socioeconomic status affect the likelihood of STW participation,
and how sex and race/ethnicity affect the likelihood of STW participation by demonstrated academic ability. Findings indicate that the higher proportions of STW participants with lower levels of demonstrated academic ability as measured by 8th grade grades were due to enrollment of those who had participated in Head Start. In addition, although adolescents who repeated a grade in grammar school were as likely to participate in STW programs as those who did not, grade repeaters were less likely to participate only in STW programs. Grade repeaters who had enrolled in Head Start were also more likely to participate STW programs. These findings suggest that STW programs attract disproportionate numbers of students with histories of marginal demonstrated academic ability because they are also more likely to attract students who had enrolled in Head Start.

This in itself need not be a negative outcome. Participation in STW programs may increase the retention rate of academically marginal adolescents who might otherwise drop out of high school. Findings lend support to this possibility. They suggest that STW programs have something to offer those whose educational experiences in grammar school were at best satisfactory if not worse. They increase the likelihood that academically marginal students remain longer and by extension might complete high school and thereby increase their post secondary educational, career, and economic prospects for years to come.

Findings in regard to Head Start participation and earnings capacity of adolescents’ parents suggest that STW programs draw from a broad range of socioeconomic groups, as legislators had intended. Adolescents with low-wage-earning parents are as likely as those with more affluent parents to enroll in STW programs. Hence, distinctions based on current socioeconomic class are not found in STW programs, even though adolescents who had enrolled in Head Start are more likely to reside in poor families and to enroll in STW programs during high school. Here the use of individual level data helps to avoid the ecological fallacy. That is, reliance on the greater likelihood that adolescents who had enrolled in Head Start as children were living in a poor families and participating in STW programs during high school might lead one to conclude that those in poor families would also be more likely to enroll in STW programs. Individual level data
show that this is not the case. Instead they show that adolescents from low-income families and those who had enrolled in Head Start as children participated in STW programs in roughly equal proportions.

These findings are important in part because broader participation along socioeconomic lines ensures a greater level of public support for such programs and in part because such diversity enriches the academic experiences of all participants. This is especially important to adolescents who had enrolled in Head Start. Such adolescents disproportionately enroll in STW programs when in high school. Their parents currently earn less than other adolescents' parents and their parents' wage-related incomes are more likely to fall within the lowest quintile of wage-earning parents. Head Starters who later participate in STW programs are thus likely to reap the benefits of exchanging educational experiences with adolescents from more affluent families.

The reaping of such benefits could not be said, however, regarding heterogeneity along lines of race, ethnicity, and sex. White males, particularly those with higher levels of academic performance in grammar school, are less likely to enroll in STW programs. Achieving a better balance along lines of race, ethnicity, and sex would further increase the workforce preparedness of STW participants than would be the case otherwise.

In conclusion, the analyses that formed the basis of the study findings were limited in part to measures available in the NLS data files. Secondary data analyses in general are inherently limited in this regard and this study is no exception. Nonetheless, as noted, findings do point in certain policy directions in support of school-to-work initiatives, as well as to additional research that can further inform related debates. Future research with additional measures than the two used here to capture elementary school experiences, for example, is needed. Further, more direct measures for socioeconomic status during elementary and high school years of the adolescents would have benefited the study. Also, what accounts for lower participation rates of white males in STW programs needs to be explored. Studies that capture motivations of participants and non-participants in school-to-work initiatives among high school students are needed. Qualitative studies that rely of in-depth interviews would be an appropriate
research design to capture this type of information. Finally, future research should examine the academic and career paths of STW graduates as they mature into young adulthood, enter the labor market, and form their own families.

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Participants' Perceptions of the Childcare Subsidy System

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This paper presents a focus group study of perceptions of cash assistance participants in Cuyahoga County, Ohio and the San Fernando Valley in California regarding childcare subsidy use, choices of care, and perceptions of quality. TANF participants discuss experiences in the subsidy system and indicate needs and preferences for childcare. Advocates, policy makers, and parents recognize the need for suitable childcare so that TANF recipients can go to work. However, discussants' comments demonstrate one result of a changing, but not yet changed, social safety net. The authors explore strategies to address participants' concerns—childcare systems that neither function as promised, nor offer quality of care that enhances child development and is safe and comforting for children.

Keywords: childcare, child care subsidy, social safety net, TANF, quality of child care, low-income families

Introduction

With the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, Federal policy makers reaffirmed the importance of childcare in helping cash assistance recipients move into employment. Under PRWORA, existing childcare subsidies were consolidated into a single block grant—the Childcare and Development Fund (CCDF). In addition, overall
funding for childcare and flexibility of choices for use of those dollars was expanded (Blau & Tekin, 2001; Michel, 1999; Schumacher & Greenberg, 1999). New options allowed parents to use licensed childcare centers, regulated (licensed or certified) childcare homes, or informal, unregulated care with a family member or friend. While these choices responded to primary concerns of availability and accessibility of care for low-income families, they renewed a long-simmering debate regarding the quality of childcare offered. Several questions have arisen as part of the debate:

1. Should parents be able to choose informal, unregulated providers or should subsidy use be confined to regulated (licensed) providers?

2. Should some measure of quality of care be a primary criterion for subsidy receipt, and, if so, whose definition of quality should prevail—the definition of human service professionals or the definition of parents?

3. Should the childcare funding agency be responsible for assuring that children in subsidized care are safe, well cared for, and educationally stimulated, or is that a parental responsibility alone?

Each of the questions listed above remains unanswered and, therefore, the debate about the availability and accessibility of quality childcare is unresolved. Unfortunately, the result for poor women has been this: Developmentally appropriate, educationally sound, and safe childcare has not been obtainable. In the study described below, focus group participants offer insights that can be used to respond to this debate.

This research was one portion of a larger qualitative study that measured the perceptions of welfare recipients during a period of change in federal, state and local cash assistance programs. The study discussed here analyzed the experiences of cash-assistance recipients who had used the subsidized childcare system. Specifically, it explored the impact of reform upon the childcare choices of public assistance recipients. We report below the findings from our study. First, we review the literature on childcare subsidies, examining the usage of care among low- and moderate-income families and the barriers to usage.
The Childcare Subsidy System

Childcare for low-income families has been subsidized by the Federal government and by state governments since the mid-1960's. Head Start has been provided at no cost to eligible families. Other subsidies have assured that welfare recipients could obtain childcare while in school or job training as part of various work incentive programs. In 1988, under the Family Support Act, the Federal government combined childcare subsidies for welfare recipients (Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Child Care [AFDC-CC]) and those transitioning out of welfare for employment (Transitional Child Care). In 1990, the Federal subsidies were added for those at risk of losing employment and entering the welfare system (At-Risk Child Care). The Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) also was created to provide childcare for low-income families and improve the overall supply and quality of childcare in the states (Blau & Tekin, 2001). Provisions of PRWORA (P.L. 104-193) expanded and consolidated subsidies in 1996 into the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), recognizing that reliable, safe childcare was essential for women transitioning from welfare to work and for maintaining employment (Adams, Snyder, & Sandfort, 2002; Blau & Tekin, 2001; Cabrera, Hutchins, & Peters, 2002; Coley, Chase-Landsdale, & Li-Grining, 2001; Kisker & Ross, 1997). The Fund provides money to states, allowing them great flexibility in formulating strategies for supporting childcare for low and moderate-income families (Child Care Bureau, 1999). However, significant evidence indicates that families face barriers in trying to access subsidies and quality care.

Accessibility

Families must apply for childcare assistance through the local TANF agency. Application procedures are often bureaucratic and complex. They require parents to appear in person to obtain and renew their eligibility, verifying income and/or participation in work-related activities with documentation. Childcare offices, for the most part, are open only during regular weekday business hours, so parents who work late shifts or attend night classes...
are forced to miss work, training, or school to prove their eligibility. Thus, administrative complexity severely restricts access to and use of subsidies (Adams et al., 2002; Cabrera et al., 2002; Mensing, French, Fuller, & Kagan, 2000; Pearlmutter & Katona, 1998).

Availability

Low-income families have traditionally chosen kith and kin as providers for their very young children (Brayfield, Deich, & Hofferth, 1993; Coley et al., 2001; Fuller, Kagan, Caspary, & Gauthier, 2002; Phillips, 1995). These informal (and usually unregulated or unlicensed) arrangements generally provide flexible hours and accommodate the needs of parents who work evening or weekend hours. They tend to cost less than market-rate care and may also be provided at no cost to parents. Formal center-based (regulated) care, however, tends to offer more and higher quality care than is available in family-based care. Center-based care is related to stronger developmental outcomes for children in these families (Cabrera et al., 2002). Yet this important finding may seem meaningless when considered in the context of urban environments in the United States. Low-income neighborhoods and communities often lack a full range of childcare settings. In addition, the few childcare settings that do exist may not have room available to accept all children (Fuller et al., 2002). With few childcare options available in their own neighborhoods, parents must look for resources in other neighborhoods and communities. Accessing remote resources may be difficult because many parents have no transportation or must rely on inefficient and/or unreliable public transportation (Mensing et al., 2000).

Payment to Providers

Many states set low payment rates for providers. This negatively affects availability of care for low-income families, simply because there is no economic incentive for providers to open shop in the neighborhood, or to expand their services (Blau & Tekin, 2001; Fuller et al., 2002). Providers who do accept the low payment rates may offer sub-standard care with untrained (and, therefore, less expensive) staff.
Affordability

Affordability in the subsidy system is related to parental co-payments required as family income increases. However, co-payments reduce available spending income for families. To avoid the loss of money, parents may avoid the co-payment system completely and choose, instead, free (unregulated) care provided by family members or friends, that is more convenient (Coley et al., 2001; Fuller, Kagan, & Loeb, 2002). Or, low-income families may opt out of the subsidy system for other reasons and spend a large proportion of their income, often in excess of 30%, on childcare arrangements (Brayfield et al., 1993; Fuller, Kagan, Caspary, & Gauthier, 2002), thus further reducing income for other living expenses, such as food, clothing, insurance, and medical care, among others.

Quality of Care: Trust and Safety

Childcare and child development professionals evaluate the quality of childcare settings based on very specific criteria. They examine physical safety and basic health procedures. They observe provider-child interactions, and the ratio of children to caregivers. They study the use of materials, types of activities, and other indications of the provider’s ability to relate to the child or children in the setting. Decisions about quality are based upon observation using valid measures (Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Galinsky, 1995). Parents evaluate the quality of childcare on different criteria. Parents want a provider who is warm and loving (Kontos et al., 1995), will communicate with them, and is flexible and understanding of their needs (Cabrera et al., 2002; Fuller, Kagan, & Loeb, 2002; Paulsell, Nogales, & Cohen, 2003). They want a provider who is trustworthy and whose childcare setting feels safe (Mensing et al., 2000). Only when these criteria are satisfied do parents talk about the importance of a learning environment, convenience, and structure of the setting.

The Study

We wanted to understand the childcare experiences of families in two communities as they moved from welfare to employ-
ment and to compare these experiences with those we found in the childcare literature. One part of the research reported here was undertaken early in 1998 and the second part in 1999. The study explored participants' recognition of the changes that welfare reform would bring to their lives. One component of the research examined participants' use of subsidized childcare services. Focus groups were held in Cuyahoga County, Ohio in March 1998, six months after federal welfare reform legislation and time limits had gone into effect. One year later, focus groups were held in the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles County, California. We conducted our study in two states and at different times as a measure of the progress of reform (see Pearlmutter & Bartle, 2000 for a complete discussion of the research).

Methods

Sample

In Cuyahoga County, one focus group consisted of 24 residents of a public housing complex in Cleveland. All of the participants were African-American; 23 were women. The second group included 14 participants; 5 women were African-American, 3 were Caucasian, 4 were Hispanic, and 1 couple was Iranian. In California, three focus groups were conducted with current CalWORKS (TANF) participants in the Northeast San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles County, California, during March and April 1999. There were 15 participants (13 women and 2 men) in the groups. The first group had 8 participants, the second 4 and the third had 3. Six were Latino and the rest were African-American. All who were Spanish-speaking elected to respond in Spanish. A research assistant provided translation. All participants were currently using or had received public assistance and had used the childcare subsidy system.

In Cuyahoga County, prospective participants responded to a notice and a letter that explained the research. In Los Angeles County, focus group members were recruited through an employment program and several social service agencies, whose staff suggested names of potential participants and distributed notices to other potential participants.
Research Questions

In general, we asked participants to discuss their experiences with the childcare subsidy system. Specifically we asked: 1.) What were your experiences in finding childcare that you wanted? 2.) What do you look for when you are seeking child care? 3.) How would you describe a good quality child care setting? 4.) Tell us about using subsidies or vouchers; and 5.) What do you think about parental choice (the policy that permits parents to select an unregulated provider for subsidy receipt)? Questions in the larger study elicited responses pertinent to child care as well. These questions included inquiries about parents' experiences with the TANF agency and their needs for support services to obtain and keep employment.

Study Procedures

In all groups, we welcomed participants and facilitated introductions. Consent forms were distributed and explained. Discussion of the questions proceeded with some background information about childcare subsidies and usage policy. Because two of the California groups were small, we prompted discussion by informing participants of responses from the first group and encouraging additional and deeper conversation. At the end of each session, we thanked participants for their discussion and distributed a cash gift or grocery gift certificate.

It is possible that the size of the California groups and our alteration of the original research protocol to encourage discussion constitute limitations to the study. Participants in these groups, however, were excited and involved discussants, responding to comments from earlier groups and initiating new content threads. In addition, as noted above, the California groups contained both native English and Spanish speakers. Time was taken during the sessions to translate the comments of Spanish speakers. The authors viewed this as an opportunity for stimulating discussion across cultures. Participants seemed to listen more carefully, eager to hear the experiences of others.

Data Analysis

Audio recordings of the sessions were transcribed for use by the researchers. After the interview/group discussions were
complete, the researchers reviewed the transcriptions and the notes taken by the co-facilitators and assigned codes to the text. We reviewed the transcripts and notes again to develop responses to individual questions and to seek consensus about underlying themes in the data.

Findings

Access and Availability

Participants in both states were concerned with negotiating the childcare system on their own, whether in finding informal care or locating regulated care. In Ohio, the parental choice policy had not been fully implemented. Here, focus group participants were angry about the lack of childcare choices and frustrated with the existing childcare system. However, many did not want total responsibility for finding their own childcare services and were unsure about risks and liability that would accrue if their child were injured in a setting they had selected. In California, where the parental choice policy had been in effect for over one year, participants were pleased with this new option, but upset by the lack of efficiency in the system overall.

Childcare, they really need to expand on childcare. They take too long to start the money that you need. You just can't take your children to someone and say, I want you to keep them and we'll pay you six weeks later. (CA)

You just don't know their background or whatever. They give you the voucher and you suppose to take and put your kids wherever . . . regardless of what environment your child is in, you are suppose to take it. But if something happens to your child and you have to take him to the hospital they are going to try to pin it on the parents. “Oh, how do we know it didn't happen before you took him to daycare?” (OH)

General availability of care was also an issue for these families:

They wanted me to go to work, right, but where is the babysitter? I got a six-month old and what do I do with her? There's no one near me. Everyone is three bus rides away. I can't do that. (OH)
I work second shift. Do you know how hard that is? I don't get home till 12:30 (am) sometimes. Where do I put my kids? These people don't want them, that center can't take them. I have very little choice. (CA)

My kid has special needs. She needs help to talk and play with others. It's not easy to find a place for her and when I do, I have to hold on to it. I can't afford the time off from work to find somebody and if I don't work, I lose my assistance. It's all tied together, you know. (OH)

Participants in both California and Ohio clearly articulated the gaps in the childcare system: insufficient supplies of infant care, second and third shift care, and reliable school-age care. Yet they recognized that availability and accessibility of affordable, safe and trustworthy childcare was essential to finding and maintaining employment.

What I want to say is I don't understand why, when there's people out here that's trying to work, why they can't get childcare, that's trying to work and get off of AFDC? And they won't provide them with childcare. I've had to have my kids stay at the school until six o'clock. (CA)

Why can't they put the daycare right here (in the public housing estate)? We got an empty apartment. Then we'll know where the kids are and we'll hire the sitters. We know the kids will be all right. (OH)

**System Failures: Payments to Providers**

The vast majority of the participants in Ohio and in California preferred using family members or friends to care for their very young children. California participants had persistent and urgent concerns about the efficiency of the new system that enabled them to choose their own provider using vouchers. They summarized the voucher program with two-word phrases: "too complicated, too slow, too cheap" (i.e., the state agency still doesn't pay the going rate for care).

My babysitting, she can't get the money. They made, they sent to me one letter and they approved the pay. But, my babysitting sent the papers and never get the check. And, I tried to call GAIN,
CalWORKS, and I don’t know, many numbers. And, they never ask, never answer me. I leave the message and never answer, nobody, nobody knows. (CA—the GAIN program was California’s welfare employment program under a federal waiver from 1985 until 1997 and CalWORKS replaced it under PRWORA)

I did what you were supposed to do, you know. I found the place. I visited and thought she (the provider) was doing what they said. I checked back and went there at different times. I had to make sure she [my child] would be safe there. So I put my kid there ’cause it felt okay and then they didn’t pay. She was certified, you know, to take those vouchers and [the state] didn’t pay her for three months. I saw the papers she sent in and they still didn’t pay. (OH)

... the semester changed and they stopped paying all of a sudden, so it’s been like two months. But, I kept calling the worker, the GAIN caseworker and the supervisor of the worker. So, they said the paperwork got all ———, so a matter of a couple more weeks, I hope, so that the provider can get paid. That’s a struggle right there because, you know, like she said you don’t want to leave your kid if you can’t even afford to pay the people. (CA)

Non-payment to providers often resulted in additional loss and damage to participant families and to providers. Examples include the following:

*Loss of employment:*
[in the words of the Spanish translator] She has a three year old right now and since her three year old was about one she started working part time taking care of some elderly people. And unfortunately, what happened is that she was not getting the baby sitter’s fees paid so she had to leave her job. And, she had nobody to care for her small child. (CA)

*Dangerous situations for the children:*
And, I ended up leaving my child at home with my daughter [due to nonpayment for her provider]. At the time she was eighteen, but the kids set the house on fire. (CA)

*General embarrassment and discouragement for the mothers:*
One participant exclaimed “It’s embarrassing” in response to another’s story about leaving her child with a provider who she couldn’t afford to pay and the welfare department didn’t pay. (CA)
Poverty struggles for the providers:
[in the words of the Spanish translator] . . . because they haven’t paid her for these three children that she’s been keeping for months. She said, “I’m going to have to stop keeping them because they haven’t paid me yet, and no one in the world can keep these kids for free.” She said, [they owe me] . . . nine hundred dollars. She was sitting there crying and asking me, we were, because I was telling her I was trying to find a place to get some food from. And, she was asking me where was I going and because she needed some too, and she had three kids there yesterday when I was talking to her. (CA)

Other concerns related to payment for care included an inability of participants to obtain approval for using family members or friends to provide childcare.

They roughly said we pay, you know, find someone and we’ll pay them. Then they want a lot of information from these people, you know, social security number, date of birth, where they live, if they’re licensed. And if it doesn’t meet up to their standards then they say no. But then they’ll tell you, well, you can have a relative do it. (CA)

Yeah, but I knew the person, she knew me and my mom and everybody in my family so I thought it’d be the best person. And then they started sending her papers saying she had guns and so forth in her household. She told them, yeah, she has, you know, weapons in her household, but her kids, she grew up and taught them. They didn’t never bother that, you know . . . (CA)

Affordability

Childcare policy debates have focused on funding to secure availability of childcare vouchers for low-income parents as a service to support their employment. For the participants in our study, voucher availability was only one component of a system that is not yet working on their behalf. Childcare vouchers are difficult to access as is the care for which the vouchers will pay. Parents recognized that, as their income increased, they were responsible for making co-payments, even though this was often a difficult and a cumbersome process. Childcare workers determine the parent co-payment according to policy guidelines for income eligibility. The childcare provider, however, is responsible for collecting the co-payment. Parents often have little money to pay
or forget and provider reminders may interfere with the parent-provider relationship. As a result, the co-pay may be delayed or neglected. Some parents simply opted out, finding ways to pay for their own childcare.

I know I owed this money. It wasn’t a lot if I paid every week, but I didn’t and then it was $20 or $30 and I didn’t have it. She finally told me I would have to take Maria and leave. (OH)

My kids have been with Selena for two years. She keeps them, but she’s not taking county vouchers anymore. If I asked her to, I would lose her for sure. I don’t want to lose her. I trust her and she is dependable. So I find ways to pay her. I get the money from their dad or from my mother. I just don’t want to bother with county (vouchers). (OH)

Quality of Care: Trust and Safety

Criteria that parents in our study used in seeking childcare were related to safety, trust of the provider, cleanliness of the setting, and the presence of supplies and materials. Quality was defined most explicitly in terms of children’s safety—protection from physical abuse, sexual assault, and neglect. Both California and Ohio participants had concerns about trust and safety, whether at county licensed (or regulated) centers and family childcare homes, or in settings selected by the parent through the parental choice policy.

Parents believed that the provider should give attention and loving care to their children. They also believed that providers should help the children learn. However, learning was not as important as children’s safety.

I want to know she is safe, she can be with my aunt and I know nothin’ will happen to her. She’s too little to talk, so I got to have somebody I can trust. You know, until she can tell me what’s happening. (OH)

I worry when there’s too many kids there. How do I know she’s paying attention to mine? Some people have other people to watch their kids. In that case they wouldn’t need a daycare. You can’t trust your kids with anyone especially with everything going on. They might get hit or worse and not even be able to tell you. Some of
the daycare’s not safe; they either nasty or kids come home with diarrhea or everything. (OH)

And then also, these people you don’t know, and some of us, it could be our first time going out to work and leaving your kids with strangers you don’t even know. And, they tell you they provide these services, but then you have to look up the people . . . (CA)

When asked about how they decided on a specific home or center for their children, Ohio respondents again talked about safety and trust.

You got to know the person, I mean, know her and her family and her friends. You got to go visit and be sure it’s clean. And it’s best to go when you aren’t expected. You got to see how they talk to the kids and what happens if someone is bad. (OH)

It’s harder for a center, because those teachers, they come and go. I want to talk to the director, make sure she is around, that the others know she is watching them. You know, I want to see dress-up and clay and water. If there’s no art stuff or they don’t have pictures that look like my kid, I wouldn’t send him there. (OH)

For some, trust and knowing the provider was most important. Learning and development of other skills could wait.

. . . I investigated childcare about two years before I even allowed myself to leave her with someone. (CA)

(in the Spanish translator’s words) Okay, first of all, she wasn’t aware of the childcare, you know, that now you could pick who takes care of your kids, but she does think it’s a good idea because if she did have to she would prefer to have somebody she knows. (CA)

My plan is to move my kids as soon as my younger one is not messing his pants. I know that Jerreane will keep them safe. But this child is going to graduate high school and I want a good start now. He can’t afford to stay with my cousin if I want him to read. She don’t do that kind of work, so I will just move them. (OH)

I’d want her in a center later, so she can learn. Right now, I just want to know she is all right. I don’t trust all those people in the center, even if I have known them—it’s too easy for someone to hit your kid or push them and no one would know it. (OH)
Discussion

Participants in this study provided a consumer's perspective in response to the childcare debate presented in the Introduction. Participants appreciated the idea of parental choice, although implementation was clearly problematic. They had definitions of quality that they used in securing a childcare placement. Last, although they had comprehensible criteria, they wanted support from the childcare agency to assure safety for their children.

Consumer responses in our study were similar to those outlined in previous literature. Both identified payment policies and practices as negatively affecting affordability, availability, and access to quality childcare. Both our study participants and the childcare literature indicated the importance of quality for consumers of childcare services. Unlike the professional definitions of quality, however, these consumers used safety and trust as primary criteria.

Missing from the policy debate, but of great concern for our participants, is protection of their children. Standards of care and stringent regulations might offer some hope in addressing these issues. However, parents indicated that the key to safety lies in developing a trusting relationship with providers. They wanted assurances of a caring and safe environment for their children and they had no faith that regulations or licensure would guarantee it.

It is apparent from the literature (see Adams & Rohacek, 2002 for a similar perspective) and our research that the childcare subsidy system in the United States must find a way to combine both the professional measures of quality (e.g., developmental outcomes) and parental measures of quality (i.e., safety and trusting relationships) to assure benefits to parents and their children. Our research results demonstrate that child development goals, particularly those for low-income children, will not be obtained if a felt trusting relationship is not established between parents and providers.

Policy Implications

Congressional debate about PRWORA reauthorization has raised many questions, including hours to be worked, funding
and availability of support services, and use of TANF funds to meet individual states' budgetary needs. Proposed childcare funding has been viewed as insufficient to meet needs of parents who must participate in work activities. Funding for TANF and low-income families is also at risk in many states, as dollars for support services such as childcare are supplanted to meet state budget needs. Securing sufficient funding for childcare and streamlining provider payment systems seem essential, given that the availability and use of subsidies makes a difference in participants' ability to obtain and retain employment. Our participants certainly concurred.

Some of the women who participated in our groups had been childcare providers in the past and were now seeking other types of employment. Much of that has to do with the value accorded to childcare work in our culture. Family childcare providers and childcare center workers earn low wages and often have little access to health care or other benefits. Childcare is women's work, still very much a part of the secondary labor market both in this country and internationally (Marchbank, 2000; Michel, 1999). This is particularly true and has had significant impact for the providers used by our participants—family caregivers, relatives, and friends of TANF recipients who care for their children.

It is apparent that, if the childcare subsidy system is to work for providers as well as for parents, providers must be compensated with a living wage and in a timely manner. State childcare systems could be responsive if staff and administrators adopted a customer service approach that values parents as consumers of service. Such an approach would require that a state and/or county's childcare subsidy agency develop the internal capacity to pay providers regularly for their work. Policy makers should also mandate that staff conduct regular childcare market-rate surveys upon which to base subsidy decisions and provider compensation.

Discussion about parental choice, use of unregulated care, and strategies for assuring developmentally appropriate care should occur as part of TANF reauthorization. At this time, subsidized childcare neither assures optimal development for children, nor does it meet parental needs.
References


Organizational Factors Contributing to Worker Frustration: The Precursor to Burnout

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This study examined the organizational factors that contribute to workers' frustration with their work situation. The sample included 141 service professionals who attended workshops on burnout in 2001. The purpose of the workshops was to increase awareness regarding the organizational factors that could contribute to burnout. Findings indicate that factors most directly affecting clients were predictive of frustration, rather than factors that may indirectly support service quality or factors impacting workers' professional autonomy. A sense of powerlessness and isolation was also predictive of frustration, suggesting that participants viewed workplace problems as a private rather than an organizational concern. To address workplace concerns, workers can empower themselves for social action by engaging in a dialogue to examine the relationship between work and individual well-being.

Keywords: workers, worker frustration, burnout, empowerment, powerlessness, isolation, workplace

This study examined the organizational factors that contribute to social workers' frustration with their work situation. Understanding workplace factors that may contribute to workers' frustration can shed light on the process of burnout, since, in a stage model of burnout, frustration is characterized as the stage prior to burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2000). Most studies on burnout tend to assess individual characteristics that either contribute to or are symptomatic of burnout, while minimizing organizational factors. By focusing on individual factors, burnout is characterized as a private concern, while an examination of the work environment frames the debate as a public concern. In 1997, Arches identified several workplace concerns related to worker
burnout, suggesting that workers should commit themselves to social action aimed at changing conditions that contribute to burnout among social service professionals. This study examined social workers' and other helping professionals' perceptions of these identified workplace conditions and assessed the extent to which they are associated with workplace frustration. Recommendations for change are made and are based on the study's findings.

Review of the Literature

Burnout is defined as a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job (Maslach 1993; Maslach, et. al., 2000). While initial research was conducted in the social service arena, current research indicates that significant proportions of the population, from factory workers to surgeons, have advanced stages of burnout (Golembiewski, Boudreau, Sun & Luc 1998).

Self-reporting of burnout is most often labeled as feelings of frustration (Keenan & Newton 1984). Symptoms experienced by individuals range from mild frustration, anxiety and depression to more severe emotional reactions often described as emotional exhaustion, or the draining of emotional resources (Daily 1970; Koocher, 1979). Other symptoms include a feeling of depersonalization, described as the development of negative, cynical attitudes towards the recipients of one's service (Maslach 1993; Maslach, et. al., 2000; Schaufali & Burenk 1996), sense of helplessness, progressive apathy, colds and illness in times of stress, becoming angry with clients and coworkers, feeling of immobilization and being pressured, overzealous relief at the end of the day, disillusionment with field of work, increased alcohol or drug use, and work related dreams with anxiety and guilt (Koocher, 1979; Lewis 1980; Lee & Ashforth 1990; Renjilan, Baum & Landry 1998).

Organizational factors identified as contributing to burnout include multiple sponsorship of social work agencies, increased regulation, role conflict, downsizing, and role ambiguity. These organizational factors are of particular concern in the current practice climate of increased privatization (Lewandowski, 1998;
Rosenthal, 2000) managed care (Crotty, 1999; U.S. GAO, 1998), and the projected budget problems currently being experienced in governments across the country (Eaton, 2002). Role conflict and ambiguity, that is, lack of clarity as to what is expected, appropriate, or effective behavior, may be brought about by lack of communication about job expectation and roles, conflict with coworkers or supervisors (Decker & Borgen, 1993; Siefert, Jayaratne, Davis-Sacks, & Chess, 1991; and Snapp 1992), differences between organizational policy and expectations and individual expectations of fairness and equity (Spence, Leschinger, Finegan & Shamian 2001), or value conflict with social work or personal values (Harrison 1980).

Inadequate communication and unrealistic expectations result in staff overload (Ray 1991) and feelings of isolation (Riordan & Saltzer 1992). Social service workers can also become frustrated when more time is spent on paperwork than with clients (Gomez 1995). While pay does not appear to be the motivating factor to work, workers often seek the intrinsic value of the opportunity to help or to have a sense of purpose (Blandertz & Robinson 1997). To further emphasize the impact of the work environment, studies have shown that burnout may be caught from co-workers or supervisors on the job through negative communication (Bakker & Schaufeli 2000; Geurtz, Schaufeli & De Jonge 1998; Mirvis, Graney, & Kilpatrick 1999).

Both age and gender have been associated with workplace frustration and burnout. However, inadequate skills and lack of experience may explain the age differences in levels of burnout, as younger workers are more likely to be inexperienced (Koeske & Kirk, 1995; Rowe 2000). Female workers compose a large percentage of the person-centered working population and may present their own particular problems. Women are often "other focused" and may have difficulty asking for help and support and in communicating their own needs (Davidson & Forester 1995; Gilligan 1982).

To summarize, sources of workplace frustration leading to burnout may originate within the organization, though individual characteristics can contribute to one's ability to cope with high stress work environments. Role conflict and ambiguity, value conflicts, feelings of isolation, and working with high stress clients
or in high stress fields of practice are some of the key organizational factors identified in the literature as contributing to burnout. In terms of individual characteristics, younger workers and women tend to be more vulnerable to burnout than older workers and men.

Engaging in Dialogue to Address Workplace Concerns

When considering strategies for addressing and preventing burnout, Arches (1997) described a process of dialogue in which workers could develop a more critical understanding of themselves as workers in relationship with the organization, themselves, colleagues, the community, and their personal relationships. By engaging in a dialogue, workers could become empowered, decrease their sense of powerlessness and isolation, and be better prepared to address unsatisfactory workplace conditions. As a guide for dialogue, Arches identified four broad areas, each containing a series of questions for dialogue aimed at working toward organizational change. The questions were based on earlier research that identified organizational factors that were experienced by burned out workers (Arches, 1994; 1991). These broad areas were: decision-making, labor processes, bureaucratization, and the extent to which participants perceive burnout to be a private or public issue.

While Arches’ primary purpose for identifying these areas may have been to serve as a guide for dialogue to develop an action plan, the questions reflect many of the organizational factors identified in the research literature as potential contributors to burnout. Consequently, these questions were used to develop the data collection instruments for this study.

Methodology

The primary purpose of this study was to examine organizational factors that are predictive of social workers’ perceived level of workplace frustration, while controlling for gender, age, and field of practice. The dependent variable was workers’ self evaluation of their degree of frustration with their work situation. The independent or predictor variables were the four previously described organizational factors suggested by Arches
Worker Frustration / Burnout

(1997): decision-making, labor processes, bureaucratization, and the extent to which participants perceive burnout to be a private or public issue.

A Likert-scale survey instrument was developed for this study, using Arches' (1997) four broad areas as a guide. The statements asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed about each item as it related to their current work environment. Both positive and negative statements were included. For example, “I have a great deal of input into decision-making and policies that affect my work” is a positive statement about the work environment, while “I often feel that my organization’s rules prevent me from working in a way that feels clinically correct” is a more negative statement about the work environment.

For the dependent variable, workplace frustration, workers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “I often feel frustrated with my work situation.” The instrument was pre-tested with three social work professionals to assess its reliability. Based on their comments, some of the instrument’s wording was changed prior to its use.

Data were analyzed using univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistics. Univariate and bivariate statistics were used to describe the sample and to provide descriptions of professionals’ perceptions of their frustration, while multiple regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between the independent variables of participants’ assessment of organizational factors in their work setting and the dependent variable of the assessment of their work frustration.

Sample

The study used a non-random sample of 141 social workers and other mental health professionals who attended one of four workshops on burnout in a Mid-western state in 2001. Approximately 250 individuals attended these four workshops, for an estimated response rate of 56%. There were more women than men in the sample, with 120, or 84% of participants being female. Participants were mostly Caucasian, as only 10% of participants were a minority. They ranged in age from 22 to 80 years with the mean age being 42. The majority of participants were MSW social
workers, as 57 or 40% had an MSW degree, while 50 or 35% had a BSW degree. The remainder of participants were other human service related professionals, including psychologists, nurses, and marriage and family therapists.

Participants also varied in their range of experience, in their practice setting, and the type of organization for which they worked. The mean number of years in practice was 10 years, ranging from one to thirty-five years. Following is the field of practices represented by these participants, listed in order of the greatest to the fewest number of participants in each field of practice: mental health (38), child welfare (28), aging (14), medical (13), and family services (9). Other fields of practice included schools, disability, substance abuse, corrections, and community organization. Almost half of the participants (64, or 45%) reported being employed by a public nonprofit agency, 52 (36%) reported being employed in a private nonprofit agency, and 15 reported being employed by a private for profit agency.

Findings

To address the main research question, the following groups of independent variables were regressed on the dependent variable of workplace frustration, while controlling for age, gender, and field of practice: decision-making, labor processes affecting clients, community, colleagues, and personal relationships; bureaucracy, and private trouble/public issue. Of these multiple regression equations, the equation including factors associated with labor processes directly affecting professionals' work with clients explained 43% of the variance in frustration, explaining the most variance of all equations tested (F = 9.369, df = 10, p = .00). Following this, the equation including factors examining the extent to which frustration is a private trouble or public issue explained 36% of the variance (F = 8.12, df = 9, p = .00). The equation focusing on bureaucratic factors explained 29% of the variance in frustration (F = 6.569, df = 8, p = .000). None of the control variables were significantly associated with workplace frustration in these equations, suggesting that specific organizational factors are more critical than individual characteristics and field of practice in explaining workplace frustration. Following is a more detailed
discussion of these three organizational factors that explained the most variance in workplace frustration.

**Labor Processes Affecting Workers' Relationships with Clients**

The equation including labor processes affecting workers’ relationships with clients explained 43% of the variance in workplace frustration and was statistically significant ($F = 9.369, \text{df} = 10, p = .00$). Of the 7 factors included in the equation, three were significantly associated with workplace association. These factors are: whether case assignments are based on sound practice principles, ($B = -.240, t = -2.101, p = .036$), feeling supported by the organization in advocating for clients ($B = -.416, t = -4.718, p = 000$), and having sufficient time to spend with each client ($B = -.331, t = -4.373, p = .00$). Since the betas associated with these variables are negative, as the use of sound practice principles, support for advocating for clients, and time available for clients increased, participants’ sense of frustration decreased.

**Private Trouble/Public Issue**

Arches (1997) stated that a public issue exists if the social structure of the workplace is negatively affecting individuals who are employed there. This equation explained 36% of the variance in workplace frustration ($F = 9.168, \text{df} = 8, p = .000$). Of the six factors included in this equation, participants’ sense of isolation ($B = .226, t = 2.94, p = .004$), powerlessness ($B = -.181, t = -2.286, p = .024$), having energy for clients ($B = -.297, t = -2.906, p = .004$) and their unit ($B = .205, t = 2.214, p = .029$) were predictive of workplace frustration. Workers who feel isolated and powerlessness may perceive their troubles as a private rather than a public matter, which Arches has suggested contributes to one’s sense of workplace frustration, and discourages workers from taking steps to seek organizational change.

**Bureaucratic Paperwork and Rules**

While the equation focusing on bureaucratic factors explained 29% of the variance in frustration ($F = 6.569, \text{df} = 8, p = .000$), only the extent to which participants felt burdened by paperwork ($B = .263, t = 2.84, p = .005$) and constricted by their organization’s rules ($B = .34, t = 3.57, p = .000$) contributed to explaining the variance in
frustration, findings that are supported in the literature (Gomez, 1995; Crotty, 1999).

**Summary of Findings**

This study supports previous research that links organizational factors to workers' self-reports of frustration, and challenges some of the research attributing burnout to individual characteristics, such as age and gender. For example, participants were concerned about paperwork and rules, which can affect the quality of services clients receive. While frustration did differ by gender and field of practice in the bivariate analyses, they were not predictive of frustration when taking specific organizational factors into account in the multivariate analyses. Further, general wisdom regarding burnout suggests that staff experience burnout when work affects them personally. In contrast, these findings suggest that participants were most frustrated when organizational factors affected clients and were less concerned when it affected them as individual employees.

**Limitations**

This study is limited by both its sampling procedures, and by allowing workers' to self-report their level of frustration. The absence of random sampling suggests that findings cannot be generalized beyond participants in this study. Additionally, it is not possible to assess the extent to which participation in the workshop impacted participants' decision to participate and their actual responses on the survey. For example, workshop attendees who were feeling a degree of frustration may have been more motivated to complete the survey than attendees who were feeling relatively satisfied with their work experience. It is also not possible to assess whether participants are experiencing burnout, since the survey asks for them to self-report their level of workplace frustration. However, it should be noted that burnout is expressed in terms of frustration, when individuals are asked to self-report (Keenan & Newton, 1984).

**Implications**

These findings support previous research that organizational factors contribute to the development of frustration, and perhaps
to burnout (Arches, 1997, Jayaratne, et.al., 1991). Both organizational support (Jayaratne, Davis-Sacks, & Chess, 1991) and control (Himle, Jayaratne, & Thyness, 1989), the inverse of powerlessness, have been associated with decreasing worker stress. Since participants report that factors influencing service quality impacts their workplace frustration, social workers and other helping professionals should reflect on the relationship between workplace conditions that contribute to their own frustration and the quality of services they deliver.

To address workplace frustration, social service administrators could consider empowerment strategies for managing their organizations (Gutierrez, GlenMaye, and DeLois, 1995). Supervisors could engage their staff in a dialogue to suggest improvements that could decrease workplace frustration. These discussions should include both work conditions and ways the organization can improve services. Administrators could also seek opportunities for increased consumer feedback. Strategies that serve to empower clients could have the added benefit of providing a more rewarding work environment for staff. Such an organizational approach to address burnout may be a significant shift in focus from emphasizing individual stress management techniques. Working toward organizational change in collaboration with clients may be a more potent antidote to the sense of isolation and powerlessness than individualized approaches alone, since going it alone may inadvertently reinforce one's sense of isolation and powerlessness.

Finally, future research should not only examine the organizational factors identified in this study, but should also assess the relationship between working conditions and service delivery outcomes. Rather than focusing on the difficulties of frustration and burnout only, research should also study job satisfaction among social workers and other social service professionals. Such research should use standardized instruments to measure job satisfaction so that findings can be compared across settings. This research would provide insight into what is going well in social service agencies, and which type of agencies, or settings, are most successful in creating an agency environment that both clients and staff experience as empowering.
References


Book Reviews


Robert Fisher and Michael Fabricant, two prominent historians of community organization, have produced an important scholarly work, which sheds new light on the struggles of settlement houses, and offers direction for community-based agencies and organizations. While the focus of the book is on settlements in New York City, the plight that Fabricant and Fisher document is not dissimilar to the struggles of non-profits across the country, all of which have experienced the constraints inherent in the quest for financial survival during several decades of conservatism in the United States.

What is unique about Fabricant and Fisher’s research of is that they modified traditional historical records research to include qualitative interviews with more than one hundred persons who actually experienced the stressful conditions, which over time moved settlements from activist centers to more traditional social service organizations. The authors begin by setting the context of the Settlement Movement with its emphasis on collaboration, community building, and social action; and while that discussion seems idealized, it does establish the importance of their emphasis on building a true sense of community among the low-income immigrant populations that were the focus for settlements. It was this community building emphasis that did bring collective power to people who alone would have had little hope for better lives. The very success of progressive settlement leaders contributed to the decline in voluntary support from wealthy philanthropists, and necessitated a shift towards government support. The trend towards public funding extends to the present time, which is characterized by performance contracting and narrowly conscripted and insecure grants. These trends are well documented elsewhere in the social work literature.
The core of the Fabricant and Fisher book is in the second part in which they report about their interviews with settlement workers. The authors in an appendix adequately detail the qualitative method that they used, although the reader will not immediately see the ways that interview content was analyzed to produce the research findings. Unlike the moving stories told by Studds Terkel, the comments of the settlement workers do not adequately convey the pain, anguish, and sense of victimization which their statements suggest they experienced. This is likely a result of the author's need to remain objective, as academics must.

If the meat of the book is in part two, then the heart is in part three. Here the authors' commitments are clearly seen as they explain their observations and conclusions culminating in an enthusiastic and compelling call for renewed efforts to build communities as the primary way to restore the promise of America. The fiscal control, which comes from contracting, privatization, and corporate involvement, brings external control, policy directions set by funders, and top-down control structures within organizations that deliver social services. The necessary focus on productivity and measurable performance outcomes, neglects the processes that are so vital for community building. Fabricant and Fisher argue that people—especially low-income people—need greater social connectedness, opportunity to develop shared meanings through common stories and patterns of interacting, their music, art, and life experience. They need to share their hope and their frustrations and anger. Such sharing is a process that can result in the development of a group identity and grass-roots activation.

Is the possibility for enhancing 'local capital' a possibility? Can the Settlement Movement return to its original purposes? Fabricant and Fisher are optimistic as they point out that the struggle never actually ended, and many front-line workers continuously work to build community and democratic participation to this day. This is the message to us all, I believe. If we agree that strength in people comes largely from their membership in viable communities, through their affiliation, by becoming one with another, then the struggle is worthwhile. Fabricant and Fisher have given us an excellent problem analysis with an understanding about the underlying causes. Now, the challenge is ours to search
for strategies and directions that might lead towards durable solutions.

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Most social workers, social work educators, and even scholars of social work history have little knowledge of the global history of the profession. The names of the most eminent historical figures in social work's development in Europe, such as Alice Salomon and Rene Sand, are largely unknown in the United States. Faithful Angels: Portraits of International Social Work Notables, edited by the late James Billups, will spark readers' interest in the worldwide history of social work through the diverse and sometimes inspirational life stories of social work leaders presented in the volume.

Billups conducted in-depth interviews with 15 notable social workers from six continents. Using oral history methodology, he reports the interviews in the words of the subjects. As explained in the preface, the author used the reputational method to identify the notables in the book, drawing upon the advice of social workers with expertise in international social work. All interviewees had retired from their regular full-time positions by the time of the interviews, although many remain active in various professional activities. In addition, all had made “exceptional professional contributions to social work and to people’s well-being in their own country and beyond during a major part of the second half of the twentieth century” (p. xi).

Each of the fifteen chapters begins with a brief biographical summary, followed by the text of the interview. The interviews address early experiences that influenced career directions, professional experiences, accomplishments, philosophies, and hopes for the future. The notables are: Gloria Abate (Peru), Angelina Almanzor (Philippines), Seno Cornely (Brazil), Armaity Desai (India), Sattareh Farman-Farmaian (Iran), Aida Gindy (Egypt), Harriet Jakobsson (Sweden), Robin Huws Jones (England), Katherine Kendall (USA), John Lawrence (Australia), Esinet
Mapondera (Zimbabwe), Meher Nanavatty (India), Jona Rosenfeld (Israel), Richard Splane (Canada), and Herman Stein (USA). With about equal numbers of men and women, professionals from industrialized and developing countries, and spanning 6 continents and 13 countries, diversity is a strength of the book. If there is imbalance, educators are somewhat over represented, although many notables combined academic careers with government service and consultancies. All had numerous professional involvements.

Because social work is a relatively young profession, the stories of these 15 individuals address significant portions of the history of the development of social work and ways in which the profession’s history is intertwined with larger movements. For example, Nanavatty talks of the influence of the independence movement in India on his ideas about social work and Mapondera shares the impact of her involvement in the liberation struggle in what is now Zimbabwe. Farman-Farmaian’s efforts to establish social work education and launch family planning in Iran are set within the changing social and political climates of her country. Readers will learn about the early days of the United Nations from Kendall and Gindy, as well as others who took part in UN projects, while Stein discusses the work of UNICEF in some depth, as he was a consultant to the first three directors of that organization. The special contributions that social work has made and can make to world organizations is evident; Stein, for example, notes his call for attention to mental health in UNICEF programs and his push for an integrated approach to child development.

The book gets off to a slow start, as the first few interviews contain little elaboration on the most interesting questions. Could the editor have done more to encourage a more satisfying response, or is it appropriate to allow the interviewee to determine how far to go in answering the questions? While the latter may be good oral history technique, it does not always leave the reader satisfied. Other interviews stand out for the insights offered or the compelling stories told. Rosenfeld explicates his ideas about practice and professional-client relationships in an engaging way that helps the reader think about his or her own perspectives on these questions. Nanavatty discusses the complexities of the introduction of professional education in India, highlighting issues
around adaptation, indigenization efforts, and the impact of the global market economy. Cornely shares his experiences in contending with a climate of oppression, and Jakobsson reveals the horrors and difficulties of work in refugee camps.

A universal message from these 15 is the importance of professional involvements. All have been deeply involved in national and international organizations in social work and social welfare. They have used these involvements to contribute to social policy and to the refinement of social work education and knowledge, and they all noted the enhanced meaning these involvements have given to their lives including the important professional friendships that resulted. As internationalists, many express the value of international contact; as Kendall puts it, "whatever we do in social work has to be more community, internationally and globally oriented" (p. 159).

The collection would have been enhanced by the selection of additional representatives from practice. To the extent possible, additional probing would have resulted in more satisfying answers to some of the questions. The questions that solicited lists of awards and accomplishments yielded less interesting material and therefore should have been minimized.

On balance, however, readers will find much that is inspirational in Faithful Angels. The book makes a significant contribution through its message that social work leaders exist in all parts of the world, and that wisdom and practice innovations are widely distributed. Valuable historical information is documented through the collection of these 15 life stories. Hopefully, it will stimulate additional research on the worldwide history of the social work profession.

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Maeve Quaid, Workfare: Why Good Ideas Go Bad. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. $60.00 hardcover, $24.95 papercover.

Canadian scholar, Maeve Quaid, provides an insightful, forthright account regarding the politics of social policy, particularly
social welfare policy. Her book makes a novel and splendid contribution to the body of literature called implementation analysis. She shows that social policies are often based on good ideas, but that people are rarely concerned with the implementation of good ideas. The ‘good idea’ of workfare, Quaid points out, is an example of how social policies are politicized by deceiving people that these ‘good ideas’ will magically transform entrenched societal problems.

Quaid defines workfare as a policy that obliges the welfare recipient to engage in training or public work in order to receive benefits. Workfare is any range of programs from a voluntary employment enhancement program to mandatory participation in a work/school/training program. Workfare was to be an improvement of the welfare reform movement leading to President Clinton’s 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). As examples of her thesis, Quaid examines three states (California, Wisconsin and New York) and three Canadian jurisdictions (New Brunswick, Alberta and Ontario) to demonstrate the similarities in philosophy and implementation of workfare.

Her study asks why are people forced into more training, when it has been proven that government past training so rarely improves the earnings or job prospects of welfare clients? To answer this question, Quaid introduces a force-field analytic model drawn from implementation research. The model demonstrates how behaviors on behalf of key groups of actors in the social policy process may cause the demise of the good idea. An example is found in the case of California, where evaluators’ ambiguous results compromised the administrative policies of its GAIN program. Quaid’s model of assessing program implementation shows the pitfalls associated with major policy initiatives. The analytic force-field model identifies the key players associated with any policy ‘good idea’. They are the politicians, policy-makers, administrators, target group (welfare recipients), evaluators, and the general public (lobby groups, media, taxpayers). Each player has a role in how a policy will affect society. Another example she provides is that politicians often collude with administrators to implement ‘the good idea’. She identifies six hazards that undermine policies, these are; the politician hazard, the policy-maker
hazard, the administrator hazard, the target-group hazard, the evaluator hazard, and the public hazard.

A critical aspect of Quaid’s argument is that a good idea emerges from popular social beliefs. Welfare reform initiatives the United States since the 1988 Family Support Act all seemed to introduce something which the public found it convincing! This, the author points out, must be understood in terms of the prevailing ideology of the time. Since the 1980s, the ideological environment has supported an aggressive attack on ‘mutual obligation’ which characterized social policy since the New Deal. Ideologically, many supported the idea of getting welfare recipients off the welfare rolls and into permanent employment.

Canada’s concept of workfare vacated a 1966 long-standing 50% federal/provincial cost-sharing agreement known as the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP). CAP dictated that the only condition for welfare eligibility was financial need. CAP was replaced by the Canada Health and Social Transfer in 1996, leaving provinces with more discretion as to how their welfare system would be managed through use of workfare. The dissolution of the CAP has financially impacted provinces since the 50% cost-sharing arrangements no longer exists. Quaid explains that reform of the welfare state in Canada transformed a system based strictly on financial need to one that is conditional on the performance of some voluntary or mandatory work-related activity, a philosophy shared by the United States.

The core of Quaid’s study is a comparison of six jurisdictions which sought to determine how effectively workfare has been implemented. She provided a summary of the design of each program, administrative challenges, evaluator’s comments, participation rates of recipients and roles of the public. Quaid’s findings ranged from administrator’s pretending there were appreciable results when there were none, welfare recipients shuffled from training program to training program without achieving desired career paths, administrative confusion over child-care subsidies, lack of tracking of clients. The findings also provided little proof that thousands of people had left welfare, that relationships between workers and clients became adversarial rather than supportive, nonexistent policy and procedures manuals, and, recipient recruitment, selection and orientation executed too quickly
without emphasis placed on the criteria of participants likelihood of success. Her analysis illustrates how a proposed good idea in policy language becomes tarnished as it is implemented.

Quaid’s study is an important one for exposing many of the myths about welfare to work programs. By using implementation analysis to show ‘good ideas’ fail to be translated into effective social policies, her book makes an important contribution. It also provides helpful insights into understanding how policy relates to practice. Although the case studies are somewhat detailed, her book is instructive in showing how policy relates to practice and how it is implemented in the real world. It deserves to be widely read.

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*A Sealed and Secret Kinship* by Judith Modell, provides an intriguing, highly-readable overview of American attitudes toward adoption, foster care, and parenting in general. Such a discussion is relevant for a nation with approximately 500,000 children in out-of-home care, a statistic no policy maker or child advocate finds acceptable. The public is dismayed by tales of children in a world of hurt, such as the recent horrific story of three New Jersey children, one of them dead, locked in a small room for months—and the responsible party was a “foster” parent who was overseeing the children while their mother was incarcerated.

Modell’s asserts that some societies assume corporate responsibility for children. In traditional Hawaiian culture, parents “gift” their children to others, and neither birth parents, substitute parents, or children experience social recriminations. That is not the case in mainstream American society, where foster parents are paid child care staff (assumed by many to be motivated by money), and foster children are perceived to be waifs or “bad kids” dressed in cast-off clothes and probably on their way to prison or other unfortunate ends.
The backdrop for this discussion is Modell’s analysis of the secrets of parenthood, particularly adoption. Adoption, historically a private, secretive arrangement, has been buffeted by waves of social change in which birth parents and adult adoptees have demanded access to adoption records, those pieces of paper that offer another dimension to personal identity. Though the open records arguments ostensibly center on individual rights and needs, they really speak to our cultural definitions of being a parent and being a child. American society sees relinquishment of a child for adoption as a shameful abdication of duty, and sees the mother (more so than the father) who is unable to effectively parent as a failure at her most important job.

Modell’s contention is that the more we can blame individuals for the woes of our children, the less we have to blame society for not providing the supports individuals need to be effective parents. Our adoption and foster care policies are built on the premise that parenting is an intensely personal endeavor. Even when society through the child welfare apparatus of each state has to care for a child, that situation is seen as temporary until the family can be rehabilitated (even though states tend to offer few resources for rehabilitation), or the child can be moved into a permanent arrangement (typically adoption and often adoption by strangers).

The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 obliquely admitted that our society’s child welfare system is bankrupt. Its provision that all children in state care must have a permanent plan for their care within 12 months of being removed from their homes begs the question that many of these children come from family situations marked by such economic, educational, moral, and health deprivation that 12 months of intervention can hardly make a dent. The option that ASFA encourages is adoption. ASFA, by advocating the “open arms” of adoption as an answer for abused and neglected children, has shifted adoption from a personal option of adding members to the family, to a rescue mission for hurting children, a struggling child welfare system, and a desperate society. Through offering federal financial rewards to states that increase their adoption rates, the government signals it is willing to pay to have individuals take this problem of dependent children off society’s hands. The law
sanctions subsidies and tax breaks for people who adopt dependent children, particularly special needs children, but states are left in control of distributing these subsidies. In the current belt-tightening atmosphere, those subsidies have all but disappeared in some states.

ASFA also deepened the prevailing perception that foster care is bad. Foster parents are paid to care for children. American society frowns upon exchanging money for children; our mythology is that we care for children because we love them. Agencies, however, train foster parents to maintain emotional distance from their foster children and to expect sudden, draconian disruptions in the placement. In essence, foster parents are trained to act like caretakers, not loving parents. ASFA increased the possibilities of allowing foster parents to adopt—known as fostadopt—but many foster parents who care for special needs children must have the continuing financial support of the state to meet their children’s needs. Without subsidies, that continuing support is not possible in adoption; this reality mitigates against adoption for many children.

Modell points out that adoption is increasingly a market-driven enterprise in which adoptive parents must be able to part with tens of thousands of dollars to acquire a child. And many adoptive parents are not opening their arms to the needy children of American, but are instead turning to the international adoption market. Many are also using the Internet to advertise their homes and to find announcements of available children. We have moved from secret, hidden records to generally-worded Internet announcements hawking potential adoptions to the world.

Modell emphasizes the remarkable paradoxes of American adoption: it is a confidential matter which is publicly debated; it is a process which assumes that a child’s identity can be totally transformed, even though it never entirely relinquishes the importance of genetics; it is an arrangement that often centers more on the fitness of the adoptive parents than the needs of the child; it is a highly individualized event which is also a mechanism for social and cultural control. This book offers a thought-provoking exposition of the ironies of adoption, and by extension, the inconsistencies of our social attitudes toward parenting in general.

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Steve Cohen, Beth Humphries and Ed Mynott (Eds.), *From Immigration Controls to Welfare Controls*. New York: Routledge, 2002. $90.00 hardcover, $28.95 papercover.

This edited volume addresses recent policy that has severely restricted access to welfare assistance by asylum seekers and other immigrants within Britain. This issue is of broader relevance as the British policy, the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, closely parallels the spirit and intent of the 1996 "welfare reform" policy in the United States, as well as similar legislation in other European states. In essence these policies position non-citizens as a lesser category of human beings undeserving of public support, based on the premise that they have not "paid into" the system. The policies also reflect age-old characterizations of immigrants as lazy, criminal, feeble-minded, unclean and immoral. Thus, these policies have arisen in the 1990s as a result of, as well as an expression of, the treatment of immigrants as scapegoats for society's ills.

For several years now immigrant advocates have been engaged in a concerted effort to document and publicize the injustices of these policies, their inconsistencies with pre-existing national and international laws, their deleterious effects upon the target populations, and their unintended consequences for particularly vulnerable sub-populations, such as children. This book is part of that effort. The contributing authors, who include immigration lawyers, researchers, and social work academicians, aim to describe the provisions of the policies, to reveal racist and capitalist motivations behind the policies, and to encourage collective resistance to the policies by welfare workers, who have been saddled with the task of policy implementation.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, labeled "Political, Historical, and International Issues," primarily traces the historical development of these policies in Britain and the various forces, identified as racism, nationalism, and classism, that have played a role. The "international" perspective is provided primarily by a chapter on the immigrant provisions of the welfare reform legislation in the United States, focusing in particular on its consequences for citizen children of non-citizen parents. Part II of the book addresses the contemporary issues in immigration and welfare. The five chapters in this section describe the various
provisions of the British policy related to asylum seekers' (and other immigrants') disentitlements from social welfare programs such as cash assistance and housing. In essence the legislation has created an entirely separate welfare system for these non-citizens, a system that is "separate and unequal." This section documents how this separate system benefits the interests of private enterprise, namely shop-owners and landlords. The section also points out how the immigration legislation is inconsistent with other legislation, in particular child welfare policy. Additionally, the chapters in this section explain how welfare workers in the non-governmental voluntary sector have been made complicit in carrying out the provisions of the legislation.

The last part of the book puts forward some bold suggestions for actions to oppose the legislation. This is really the most interesting part of the book, because it is the most thought-provoking and controversial. There are three chapters in this section. The first addresses possible legal challenges to the policy via other British policies and European conventions. The next chapter advocates the repeal of all immigration control laws worldwide, including both internal controls such as those addressed in this book, as well as external controls that restrict entry. The argument put forth for this is that "fair" immigration controls are impossible to achieve because all controls are inherently racist; hence, no controls are the only just solution. However, the author of this chapter gives very short shrift to the very serious problems that would ensue from this approach. The author also appears to take a rather relativist stance on human rights, which some readers might take issue with. The final chapter advocates that the welfare workers in the nongovernmental sector, who have been charged with implementing the legislation, take collective action by refusing to cooperate in this scheme. This is another area of controversy, as some may question whether change can best be achieved by working against the system or working with it.

On the whole this book is an important contribution to the debates on immigration policy and welfare policy. The book clearly lays out the harmful, mean-spirited, and selfish intents and consequences of the internal immigration controls in Britain, and it takes a clear and bold stance on strategies for resistance, which can serve as a launching point for further debate. The book could have benefited from some better synthesis and organization. Quite a
few of the chapters are rather repetitive. A concluding chapter that
draws everything together, and that might provide more interna-
tional perspective, would also have been helpful. Nonetheless,
it is definitely recommended reading for all concerned not only
with issues of immigration but of social justice.

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Two recent books, Haney’s *Inventing the Needy* and Leira’s
*Working Parents and the Welfare State* grapple with what both
authors see as a transformation of the welfare state in response
to the influx of women, specifically mothers, into the paid labor
market. These works emerge against the backdrop of increased
labor force participation of mothers with young children in most
OECD countries; in the U.S. for example, more than 60% of all
mothers work at least part-time outside the home. With a general
decline in rates of marriage and fertility, and an increasing rate
of divorce, studies which examine the state’s ability to support
working families are timely. Where the focus of *Inventing the Needy*
is the Hungarian welfare state from 1948 to the present, *Working Parents* is confined mainly to developments in the Scandinavian
countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) during the
1990s. Both Haney and Leira create a tripartite model explaining
the transformation of their respective welfare state, although
Leira’s work is both more theoretical and analytic. However, it is
ultimately their views on gender division and stratification that
unite these two works.

Haney’s exhaustive treatise begins with a premise that the
essential characteristics of the Hungarian welfare state have mor-
phed three times during a 50 year period, from a regime type
she terms Welfare Society (1948–1968) to a Maternalistic model
Typology was crafted by the author after bringing together an impressive range of archival data, interviews and participant observation research. *Inventing the Needy* is divided into three sections which mirror the classifications described above, and is full of Hungarian terms and names which are simultaneously authenticating and distracting. In Part 1 the author explores the contours Hungarian welfare state after its “inclusion” in the Soviet Bloc using the lens of gender division and stratification. Haney traces in great detail the development of the Hungarian welfare state with particular emphasis on the role of caseworkers who, by most standards, seem positively intrusive. The author supplies numerous examples of interactions between caseworkers and clients collected primarily from case files that demonstrate the “helping hand” of the state. The author goes on to argue that despite inherent “tensions” of the socialist regime, the Welfare Society was ultimately positive, providing citizens with an increased bounty of resources and (inadvertently) empowering clients by allowing them to “harness the state’s concern with public and private relations to secure their own well-being” (p.64). The positive interpretation of intrusive socialist policies vis-à-vis women by Haney’s own admission is well outside of feminist and non-feminist scholarship alike. Without concern for the paternalism and social control embedded in the policies and practices of the period, Haney defends her conceptualization much as the socialists did, buttressed by her own view that the expansive nature of the intrusion of the state in family life empowered women and created a broad arsenal of ways for women to “protect themselves in everyday life” (p. 88)—protection from what, becomes clearer in the second part of the book.

The second section of the book describes the emergence of the Maternalistic state in the late 1960s which was grounded in psychological research findings surrounding the importance of the mother-child relationship—a view toward which Haney is rather unsympathetic. Haney cites numerous examples of the “attack” (p. 99) on the previous welfare state—the introduction of a three-year paid maternity leave and family allowances, the advent of Child Guidance Centers to assist with issues pertaining to child development. Along with these reforms, which Haney characterizes rather negatively, came new practices such as protective labor
legislation and "domesticity" and "personality" tests which the author views as significantly more intrusive and detrimental than the practices of the previous welfare regime. Now employing a radical feminist lens, the author portrays these developments as undesirable—where the Welfare Society promoted gender equality and demanded that men compensate for their wives inability to perform household duties due to "full employment" requirements, the Maternalistic state's welfare apparatus treated women (as caretakers of children) differently by creating policy that encouraged women to stay-at-home and raise children.

While it is clear that neither incarnation of the welfare state constructed by the author is attractive due to high levels of social control, it is difficult (absent a radical feminist bent) to view one as significantly better or worse than another. Both iterations sent caseworker's into individuals homes to make determinations about essential components of family life. In time, the author claims, the Maternalistic State gave way to a model in which eligibility was linked to need. While the fall of communism in 1989 begins the final section of the book, the author notes an increase in class division began in the 1970s, portending the development of the Liberal Welfare State. Predictably, the author views the development as further eroding women's "practical maneuverability" since female clients "now found it impossible to convince welfare workers to mediate power relations in their homes, to scold abusive spouses, or to mitigate their own feelings of isolation" (p. 246). While the author characterizes the decreased "maneuverability" as negative, another interpretation might suggest it was inappropriate for adult women to rely on third party strangers to negotiate who takes out the trash. Perhaps the interpretation of "maneuverability" as described demeans, rather than empowers women, relegating them to a role of a helpless individual. While the study is thoughtful, exhaustively-researched and thought-provoking, and would be of interest to professionals in the field of social work as well as scholars with interests in gender studies or Hungary, the author's uneven hand is noticeable and detracts from the work.

Leira's book also deals with the implications of women's paid labor on family life and childcare, although it is steeped in the theoretical tradition of Parsons, Marshall, and Esping-
Andersen. From this base, the author seeks to define three “model families”—one where parents engage in “specialization” of the parental roles, typically with a bread-winning father and care-providing mother; a “sequential employment of mothers” typology after the primary child-caring functions are fulfilled; and finally a view of the “shared societal roles”. Leira implies that with the instability in modern family the first two models are sustainable for single parent families only with state-sponsored assistance.

Leira sees the social rights of citizenship as more accurately defined as the social rights of wage-earners. This classification plays nicely to Leria’s theoretical argument and leads to an analysis that examines policies that she claims place the responsibility for childcare squarely within the domain of the state. The author makes an interesting distinction between the longstanding “right” of the father to “opt-out” of child-caring responsibilities against the equally long-standing tradition of mothers not having a right to exercise. In the final chapters of the book, the author engages in a prototypical feminist analysis concerning three different types of policies—state funded day care, parental leave, and cash benefits for childcare. She concludes that the first two benefits are preferable since they better promote the value of gender equality since it is generally only mothers who elect cash benefits that allow them to opt-out of paid labor. What makes this book interesting is the author’s corroboration of the fact that many fewer father’s utilize state-sponsored leave, yet the author remains committed to her original thesis that gender balance with respect to caring for children is desirable, if elusive. Disappointingly, the author fails to develop the why of the gender division of childcare—seeming to dismiss outright that many mothers may prefer to be at home with their children rather than sending them to state-sponsored daycare facilities where they are cared for by women (other people’s mothers, not fathers!), or that women may be better at performing caring-related functions. These omissions distract from an otherwise strong analytic book that will appeal to those interested in the transformation of the welfare state, family policy, and gender division of labor.

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Book Notes


Globalization has become a popular concept not only in academic circles but in the media and in everyday discourse as well. A huge number of books and articles on the subject have been published and, as the street protests that accompanied meetings of international trade organizations and officials reveal, it has evoked strong passions. The idea of globalization has also attracted the attention of social policy scholars and generally, they have taken the view that globalization has resulted in increased unemployment, poverty and other social problems. In addition, most social policy scholars contend that globalization has exerted powerful pressures on governments to reduce social expenditures and retrench social programs. Although these conclusions have been challenged, the prevailing wisdom in social welfare circles is that globalization has had very negative consequences for human well-being.

In view of the current interest in globalization, the publication of a textbook on the subject by two leading British social policy writers is to be welcomed. The authors are well-respected scholars whose previous work on welfare ideology and other social policy questions has been acclaimed. The purpose of their book is to provide students with a comprehensive account of the subject of globalization and to introduce them to the debates and controversies attending the topic.

The book begins by defining globalization in a narrow economic terms as the transnationalization of the world economy which, the authors contend, occurred in the latter half of the 20th century. The authors are aware that other scholars dispute the idea that globalization is a recent phenomenon, and they allocate space to discussing alternative views. However, they do not discuss alternative definitions of globalization. Like many other social policy writers, the authors adopt a narrow economic definition
which equates globalization with the spread of international capitalism. Using this definition, the book discusses the impact of globalization on social conditions in what the authors call the ‘advanced’ industrial countries and the developing countries. In addition, a chapter is devoted to gender issues and another to international migration. These are followed by a chapter on what is described as ‘global social policy’. The book concludes with a discussion of the future of global social policy.

Although the book covers a large subject matter, its narrow economic definition of globalization is a major limitation. This is unfortunate because it ignores the many other ways that increased international integration affects communications, mobility, culture, political initiatives and wider social relationships. Another problem is that the book presents the arguments as if they were new. Some of the chapters, such as the one on social policy in the Global South and on the development of global social policy are blissfully ignorant of the substantial body of literature which had previously addressed these issues. While British writers have only recently begun to promote the idea of forging a global social policy, international agencies such as the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health organization have been actively engaged in this task for decades. Although the book’s intention is commendable, it does not succeed in exposing students to the issues in a way that will promote critical thinking and an appreciation of the complexities of the processes that are currently shaping the world.


Single motherhood is deeply stigmatized in the United States. Although there are several ways in which women can become single mothers, once a woman is parenting alone she faces many challenges including the daunting task of raising her children on her own. There is little relief for women in this position, fathers often do not assist in the raising of children, the welfare system may decline assistance or become a cycle in which women are trapped with no opportunity for a more promising future. Single mothers in the United States are stretched emotionally, physically
and financially to the breaking point with little to no relief in sight. However, single women in other many countries such as Sweden do not face the same challenges. Indeed, in Sweden single mothers are treated very differently. This book explores the difference in the treatment of single mothers in the two countries.

The view of single motherhood in the two countries is diametrically opposed. Winkler notes that in the United States single motherhood is frequently stigmatized and difficult in the best of circumstances. The view of single motherhood is quite different in Sweden. The task of mothering is seen as a honored occupation rather than a burden to the individual’s productivity potential. Concessions are made so that women in Sweden have the opportunity to spend as much time and resources as necessary to raise healthy, adaptive children. The book shows that there is a wide gap in political philosophy when it comes to single parenting in the two countries.

Winkler divides the text into nine chapters which follow each other in a logical way. The book begins with an introduction to the issues associated with single motherhood and then a description of the historical differences in social policies for single mothers in the advanced welfare states is given. The next chapter discusses women’s issues in the United States including issues such as reproductive rights, work, illegitimacy and social rights for single mothers. The following several chapters discuss the historical and current state of political affairs regarding single motherhood policy in Sweden. Winkler presents the issues of equality in the workplace, women’s economic independence, Neoliberalism and privatization of the family, all as they relate to social conditions in Sweden. The final chapter discusses equality and freedom for solo mothers in both countries. The closing chapter suggests modifications to the discourse of single parenthood in order to soften the social and political climate in the United States.

This book’s contents is well presented, the organization is excellent and the authors points are brought across in a salient manner. Winkler examines some of the most difficult issues that have faced women in the last three decades stressing the policies that seem to be working for the betterment of womankind in Sweden. The only criticism that can be make of this text is the stark way material on the two countries is presented in different chap-
ters. Because the two countries share many common features, it may have been preferable if the material had been presented together instead of in separate chapters dealing respectively with the two countries. Nevertheless, this is an excellent book that will make excellent supplemental reading for a special topics course on the family or single parenthood. It would also be beneficial for policy makers and those who work closely with single mothers.


Human health and the environment are unequivocally linked. As human society continues to grow and develop, its impact on the environment increases. Air and water pollution, radiation, and artificial chemicals in food are daily realities. Research on the human health risks of exposure to pollutants has shown significant negative health impacts associated with these exposures. But, outside of researchers and health professionals focused on studying the links between health and the environment, there is little public understanding of these issues. This book, edited by Michael McCally, attempts to bridge the knowledge gap by offering thorough descriptions of the health effects of environmental pollutants.

The book consists of seventeen chapters covering a range of topics important to understanding humankind’s impact on the natural environment and how those impacts affect human health. The most powerful chapter is chapter one, written by the editor. In this chapter the connection between human health and the environment is succinctly described. McCally cautions, "... interactions between poverty, population growth, and environmental degradation impede sustainable economic development and worsen population health." Chapters two through twelve concisely address the issues of air pollution, water quality, global climate change, loss of species and ecosystems, ozone depletion and radiation, and the relationship between cancer and the environment, heavy metal exposure, endocrine disruption, and the body burden of industrial chemicals. Each chapter offers a description of current research in an area and recommendations for courses of action to address the concern.

The next four chapters cover more technical and evaluative
issues including risk assessment, the precautionary principle, vulnerable populations, and the impact of war on the environment. Chapter thirteen, addressing risk assessment, is far too short for such a complex topic and offered only a cursory discussion of the intricacies involved in the assignment of risk and the need for public understanding of risk. Chapter fourteen discusses the precautionary principle which states that even in the face of scientific uncertainty, the threat of significant public health risks should be addressed through precautionary action to counter the threat. The chapter thoroughly addresses the complex interplay of ethics, science, values and biases in formulating responses to possible environmental hazards. The discussion of vulnerable populations in chapter fifteen focuses on occupational hazards and the vulnerability of children to toxic exposure. The book concludes with a discussion of the ethical responsibilities of the health care professions to coordinate environmental ethics into their worldview.

The chapters in Life Support are written by medical professionals and is focused on human health-based arguments for environmental sustainability. The concise description of the issues and the brevity of the chapters make this text particularly approachable. Health and social service professionals will appreciate the thorough discussion of important health and social justice related environmental topics. The book will also be of value to other professionals interested in a thorough overview of these important environmental health issues.


Although poverty has been a subject of intense academic and public debate in the United States for more than century, it remains an unresolved problem of sizable proportions. This reflects the low priority it has been given on the national policy agenda and the fact that the nature and causes of poverty continue to be viewed from ideological perspectives. Unfortunately, scientifically rigorous research has seldom been used to formulate policies and programs that can effectively address the problem. When anti-poverty policies have been based on research, they
have often been linked to partisan politics and have become highly contentious. Similarly, claims to scientific validity have often been rejected by academic critics who, sometimes with justification, regard particular interpretations as being ideologically motivated.

The publication of a book dedicated to describing and analyzing approximately one hundred years of poverty research in the United States is, therefore, to be welcomed. O'Connor's intention is to trace the way poverty research has evolved from a preoccupation of social reformers at the end of the 19th century to highly technical studies of the demographic characteristics of the poor in the late decades of the 20th century. She shows how poverty research has gradually become less concerned with issues of structural inequality and opportunity and more concerned with behavioral change, work placement and assessments of the effectiveness of policy efforts to 'end welfare as we know it.'

O'Connor is an historian with experience of administering poverty alleviation research and demonstration projects for major foundations. Her historical insights and understanding of the issues is reflected in her insightful analysis of more than a hundred years of evolving social science scholarship into poverty. She has a prodigious knowledge of the field and an impressive ability to summarize a huge corpus of work on the topic. The book is well organized, offering a readable, chronological overview of the subject. It is essential reading for anyone working in the field today. In addition, because poverty is so closely related to issues of social policy and to professional social work practice, it should appeal to policy makers and practitioners as well as academic researchers. The author's ability to summarize major theoretical perspectives in the field is particularly impressive and will be of value to students who will benefit from the way she manages to review and present the most salient issues in what is an exceedingly complex body of scholarly research.


A subtle but major shift in economic and cultural life occurred during the latter half of the 20th century. While industrial wage
employment (or Fordism) dominated economic activities during the 19th and early 20th centuries, it ceased to provide an organizing framework for economic interactions and has now replaced the dominant industrial mode of production with a service and financial economy. As this interesting book by Randy Martin suggests, the Western world today is awash with money and is obsessed with the processes of acquiring, borrowing, securing and transferring money. Financial transactions now dominate economic exchanges to extent not known before. While industrial production previously served as the focus for economic activities, financialization now serves this purpose.

Martin begins with an interesting discussion of how the financial economy has grown since the 1970s. Keynesian economic ideas have been supplanted by monetarism and people are now obsessed with borrowing, interest rates and inflation. Martin locates the change from Keynesian to monetarist thinking in the 1970 when stagflation characterized the Western economies and when the oil shocks shattered the ability of international economic institutions to manage the global economy. Although President Nixon began his first term by perpetuating the Keynesian policies of his predecessors, his renunciation of the gold standard and the introduction of floating currencies set into motion a new world of international finance which has grown enormously over the last thirty years.

Martin also shows how the financialization of the economy has changed the behaviors and priorities of many ordinary people. It is not only that people today have access consumer credit to an extent that would have been unimaginable even a generation ago, but that financialization has been so infused into the popular culture that the obsession with money now dominates family life, personal ambitions and decisions. Risk is also an integral feature of daily life. This development has profound implications for social policy since the risks associated with industrial employment are no managed through collective means but through individual decision making. As individuals are increasingly disassociated from collectivities, they are compelled to engage the financial world to protect themselves and their families from life contingencies. Martin also draws attention to the way financial institutions operate in low income neighborhoods and how debt
has become increasingly common among those who can least afford to meet the exorbitant interest rates lenders charge. Programs that encourage the poor to save are also becoming more prominent and are yet another example of how the financialization of everyday life has affected social policy. Financialization also has implications for social policy in the developing world where microcredit programs such as the Grameen Bank now dominate development thinking.

Although Martin's style is discursive, this is an important book which deserves to be widely read. Social policy scholars who have traditionally focused on the public social services need a better understanding of how financialization is transforming the world of social policy. The question of how social policy scholarship will respond to these new realities still remains to be answered.
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