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The Effects of Prolonged Job Insecurity on the Psychological Well-Being of Workers

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Job insecurity has been increasing since the 1980s. While researchers have found job insecurity to be negatively associated with multiple indicators of well-being for workers and their families in cross sectional studies, less is known about the long term effects of prolonged job insecurity. Specifically, there is a need to collect measures of both insecurity and its consequences at multiple time periods. The current study followed workers for 3 1/2 years to assess the effects of chronic job insecurity on psychological distress. Results indicate that while workers reported increased feelings of security over time, there were longer term negative effects on workers' depression levels. The importance of government regulations to decrease insecurity is discussed.

Keywords: job insecurity, well-being, workers, psychological distress

As employment continues to shift in the U.S., more and more workers face uncertainty in their jobs. Almost four million U.S. workers who were previously in long tenured positions

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were displaced from their jobs between 1997 and 2000 (Helwig, 2004). One important reason for this shift is increasing global competition. The search for cheap labor and greater profits has resulted in the restructuring of the economy from manufacturing to service industries (Mishel, Bernstein & Allegretto, 2005). The service and retail industries accounted for 83.3% of all new jobs between 1989 and 1995. At the same time, the manufacturing industry, once considered the most stable employer in the U.S. for non-college educated workers, declined in the 1990s, losing over 2 million jobs between 1980 and 1995 (Mishel, Bernstein & Schmitt, 1997). Blue collar workers were hit hard between 2000 and 2003 as well, losing another 2.7 million jobs in just a three year period (Mishel, Bernstein & Allegretto, 2005).

Job insecurity is not reserved for those workers whose employment is immediately threatened, however. Job insecurity is defined as a subjective perception of feelings of insecurity about the future of one’s employment (Witt, 2005). Perceived job insecurity results when “workers come to doubt the continued existence of their jobs in the future” due to economic or organizational change (Reynolds, 2000, p.5). While job insecurity is especially relevant in the context of a corporation that is experiencing downsizing, perceived job insecurity is also experienced by workers in seemingly unthreatened job situations (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). In a national survey in 1996, for example, 79% of respondents said that “every time” they heard about a company downsizing they worried about their own job, regardless of whether their own job was personally threatened (Andolsen, 1998). Therefore, the term “job insecurity” can be used to represent feelings associated with an actual threat to one’s job, such as a lay off notice, or a more general perception by workers of job risk. Such findings are consistent with the central idea behind stress research, that the anticipation of a stressful event represents an important source of psychological distress equal to an actual event experienced (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Conceptual Framework

While there is a growing body of research addressing short
Prolonged Job Insecurity and its negative effects on workers and their families, there are many theoretical gaps in our understanding of the potential longer term consequences for workers who experience prolonged job insecurity. The current study is an attempt to address these gaps. Three important conceptual issues will be addressed in this paper. First, most studies that have examined the consequences of job insecurity have been cross-sectional, “relating job insecurity to its potential outcomes within a single data collection wave. This means that very little is known about the long term effects of job insecurity” (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002, p.33).

The few longitudinal studies that have examined prolonged job insecurity have largely looked at only two points in time. Such a design does not allow for the assessment of potential non-linear effects of job insecurity over time. This becomes particularly salient considering that some social scientists speculate there may be a cumulative effect of stress for job insecure workers, resulting in greater negative psychological outcomes over time, while other research indicates that job insecurity dissipates quickly and the effects are not cumulative (Heaney, Israel & House, 1994; Armstrong-Stassen, 2002). Therefore, longitudinal analyses where both “insecurity and its postulated consequences are measured on multiple occasions is needed to ... detect the strength and duration of the effects of job insecurity on its potential outcomes” (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002, p. 33).

Second, there are only a small number of studies on the long term effects of job insecurity that have been conducted in the United States. Most of the longitudinal studies on the effects of job insecurity have been conducted in Canada, Australia and Europe. There may be important variations in outcomes of insecurity from country to country. The literature needs to be examined carefully, since workers in other countries may be more or less protected from the severity of potential job loss depending on whether they have employment policies that serve to protect them (Givord & Maurin, 2003; Andolsen, 1998). If this is the case it could account for some of the conflicting results reported in the longitudinal research on job insecurity thus far.

Third, while there has been much conceptual discussion
in the literature on the demographic characteristics of workers who are most vulnerable to the potential negative effects of chronic job insecurity, there are few studies that have empirically examined these relationships (Bargal, Back, & Ariav, 1992; Andolsen, 1998). Therefore, demographic and financial characteristics of U.S. workers are included in this analysis to examine variations in vulnerability to job insecurity.

This paper presents the results of a longitudinal study that followed a sample of U.S. manufacturing workers over 3½ years with multiple data collection periods in an attempt to resolve some of the disagreements surrounding the strength and duration of the effects of prolonged job insecurity on the psychological well-being of workers. The inconsistencies of results from previous longitudinal research on job insecurity are reviewed taking into account the country of origin. Finally, implications for policy that may mediate the impact of job insecurity are discussed.

The Changing Nature of Job Security

For decades after World War II, workers in the U.S., particularly in the manufacturing sector, expected that good employees would be offered long term job security. But, as Andolsen (1998) points out, the terms of the social contract between employees and employers have changed, with employers no longer promising long term employment with the company in "highly competitive conditions in an increasingly deregulated global economy" (p. 25). This changing social contract between employers and employees has been coined by Andolsen as the new "employability contract", whereby employees are expected to enhance their skill levels to compete in the labor market with no guarantees of long term security from employers.

Beginning in the 1980s many corporations began downsizing, firing long time employees, and shifting from full-time workers to contingent workforces: part-time, temporary, and contract workers. Part of the intensity of the pain of job insecurity, according to Wallulis (1998), comes from a sense of betrayal by employers. Being a good employee and having a sense of loyalty to the company was no longer enough to maintain security in their jobs. The new "employability" model is
Prolonged Job Insecurity

based on the highest short term profits for corporations, while workers must plan for a future in a highly uncertain and competitive economic environment.

Cross-Sectional Research on Job Insecurity

There was a sharp increase in job insecurity during the recessionary period of the 1980s (OECD, 1997), and the effects of workers’ perceived job insecurity were well documented during that time (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Kuhnert, Sims & Lahey, 1989; Vance & Kuhnert, 1988). Cross-sectional research conducted during this period consistently found stress, anxiety, financial concerns and fear associated with job insecurity.

There were fewer studies that examined the negative effects of job insecurity on U.S. workers during the era of sustained economic recovery of the late 1990s and early 2000s, even though in 2000, 40.4% of laborers and 30.2% of blue-collar workers reported feeling insecure in their jobs (Reynolds, 2000).

In a cross-sectional study at a large university undergoing cutbacks and lay-offs in the U.S., Larson, Wilson and Beley (1994) found that job insecurity was negatively associated with marital satisfaction and overall family functioning for both husbands and wives. In this study, job insecurity occurred as the result of a threat to the respondent’s job situation. In a second cross-sectional study, Finnish researchers examined perceived job insecurity in a general sample of dual earner couples (Mauno & Kinnunen, 2002). Economic stress and low self-esteem were significantly related to job insecurity. Women were more insecure than men, and employees in the private sector were more insecure than workers in the public sector.

Finally, researchers in Australia sampled 1188 professionals in a cross-sectional general population survey to assess the association between job insecurity and depression, anxiety, a physical health summary scale and self-rated health (D’Souza, Strazdins, Lim, Broom, & Rodgers, 2005). Job insecurity was found significantly associated with all four outcome measures, although the effects were most marked for depression and self-rated health.

The cross-sectional studies above largely demonstrate that workers’ feelings of job insecurity correlate negatively with
multiple indicators of well-being for both workers and their families, whether the perceived insecurity was the result of current restructuring, or if it were a more generalized feeling of job insecurity. Since these studies describe cross-sectional research, it remains unknown whether insecurity or its consequences can be expected to subside after a short period of time. The experience of prolonged job insecurity may prove to be much more problematic for workers and their families in the long run.

Longitudinal Studies of Job Insecurity

Little definitive evidence exists regarding the effects of prolonged job insecurity on emotional well being. The studies that have examined this area have found mixed results. Heaney, Israel and House (1994) investigated the effects of extended periods of job insecurity in a sample of U.S. car manufacturers. Data were collected in two waves over a two year time period. The study provides evidence of the negative effects of chronic levels of job insecurity on job satisfaction and physical health. Heaney and colleagues found that extended periods of job insecurity, due to industry cutbacks and restructuring, contributed to increased physical symptomatology over and above the effect of job insecurity at any one point in time. The researchers concluded that job insecurity may be a cumulative stressor, increasing its effect over time. However, they recommended more longitudinal research that collected data at multiple points in time to better understand the process by which stress accumulates.

Researchers in Sweden conducted an analysis of a large retail chain undergoing major organizational restructuring (Hellgren, Sverke & Isaksson, 1999). They collected data at two points in time, the first in 1995 and the second a year later. Results were similar to those found in the previous study. By adding mental health status at time one to their multivariate model, job insecurity plus their covariate increased the amount of variance in mental health explained by the model from 30% to 39%. This supports Heaney, Israel and House’s (1994) hypothesis of a cumulative effect of job insecurity on mental health. However, they too collected only two data points at two year intervals.
In an attempt to resolve the distinction between short term and more chronic insecurity, Ferrie, Shipley, Stansfeld and Marmot (2002) examined data from the “Whitehall II study” a general population survey which targets all London based staff working in 20 civil service departments. They examined phase four (1995/6) and phase five (1997/99) of the study to assess changes between two groups of respondents: those who moved from secure to insecure employment from phase four to phase five; and those who they determined were chronically insecure during the same time period. Male respondents who moved from secure to insecure employment situations between the two data collection periods reported poorer self-rated health, scored lower on the general health questionnaire (GHQ), and reported higher levels of depression. Women reported lower self-rated health scores and higher blood pressure. Of those respondents who experienced chronic job insecurity, both men and women reported poorer self-rated health, lower GHQ, and higher depression levels.

Between 1990 and 1991, researchers in Australia collected questionnaires twice within a two month period to assess prolonged job insecurity in a sample of state public transportation employees whose department was undergoing restructuring (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995). There were no significant differences in time one and time two levels of psychological distress, indicating that prolonged job insecurity was associated with continuously high levels of psychological distress, but these effects were not cumulative.

In contrast, results from a Canadian study by Armstrong-Stassen (2002) suggest that downsizing in a large government program did not have long term effects on the survivors’ job security. Rather, as soon as employees knew they had survived the period of downsizing, feelings of job security were higher than at any point during the downsizing period. This study was the only study that looked at multiple points in time, collecting four waves of data from 1996-1999. Using repeated paired sample T-tests, Armstrong-Stassen reported that after the initial downsizing, feelings of security increased at each data collection period. Given that this study uses repeated measures, it is important to note that it is also the only study that found that insecurity significantly decreased quickly after the
initial job threat dissipated. However, Armstrong-Stassen did not include a measure of psychological or physical well-being, but focused instead on feelings of morale and organizational trust. Results indicate that while workers felt more secure over time, feelings of morale and trust remained low throughout. This may indicate that although job security increased over time, there were longer-term negative effects on both morale and organizational trust.

Vulnerable Workers and Job Insecurity

It is important to understand which workers appear to be most at risk for negative outcomes of job insecurity. Several conceptual articles on job insecurity emphasize the importance of not only examining how job insecurity affects mental health, but also postulates who may be most affected. Bargal, Back and Ariav (1992), for example, theorize that older workers are at great risk and should receive heightened attention during periods of prolonged job insecurity. Likewise, Andolsen (1998) suggests the "new employability" model creates a situation for workers that place women, older workers and minorities at greater financial and psychological risk if they are displaced.

Few studies measure variations in the effects of job insecurity by different demographic and financial characteristics, however. Manski & Straub (2000) found that older, less educated workers who experienced job insecurity experienced fewer expectations of finding a good job if a job search became necessary. They also found that job insecurity was much higher for blacks than for whites. Other studies have simply measured who is at greater risk for job insecurity, but have not linked risk with outcomes. For example, Ferrie and associates (2005) found marital status significant in predicting feelings of job insecurity, with single persons twice as likely as married persons to report insecurity. D'Souza and associates (2003) found divorced, separated, and widowed persons most likely to experience job insecurity. Mauno & Kinnunen (2002) found women and economic stressors predicted greater job insecurity. No studies were found that specifically linked demographic variations in workers with mental or physical health effects of job insecurity.

To summarize, few of the studies reviewed here were
conducted in the U.S. Further, evidence of a cumulative effect of prolonged job insecurity on mental health is hampered by design issues. However, what evidence does exist is compelling and demonstrates that chronic job insecurity can, at the least, have a prolonged negative impact on workers. Further, there is some evidence that personal characteristics may make some individuals more susceptible than others to the negative effects associated with job insecurity. The present study examines the psychological effects of job insecurity at multiple points in time as well as examines individual characteristics of workers who may be more at-risk for these effects.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study will attempt to clarify and add to the knowledge base by examining workers' experiences of prolonged job insecurity in a manufacturing plant in the southeastern United States. The research questions are as follows:

1. Are job insecurity, financial difficulty and demographic characteristics of age, race, marital status, gender and number of children significant in predicting depression and anxiety?
2. Is there evidence of cumulative psychological distress associated with prolonged job insecurity?

Sample and Methods

This paper reports on a stratified systematic sample of 112 workers from a garment manufacturing plant. The workers were originally subject to perceived job insecurity in 1998 as a result of their close proximity to a similar manufacturing plant that had closed just fifteen miles away. Initially, the workers in this sample were assured that their plant was not slated for closure. Seventy nine percent of the job insecure sample continued to be followed over a three and a half-year period, until they received notice that they, too, would be displaced.

Interviews were conducted every six months for a total of eight data collection periods. The project had six interviewers who received interviewer training. Each interview took
approximately 45 minutes to 1-1/2 hours to conduct. The interviews asked about workers' financial status, emotional well-being, their feelings of job security, and collected demographic information.

Measurement
The dependent variables were measured using the depression and anxiety scales from the Symptoms Check List (SCL90-R, Derogatis, 1994). The clinical cutoff for both depression and anxiety was a standardized score greater than 62. The scales have been studied extensively for use in both psychiatric patients and adult non-patient groups. The current study uses adult non-patient norms. There are also separate T-score transformations for males and females. Reliability coefficients in these groups were .90 for depression and .85 for anxiety. The instruments also have shown good convergent-discriminant validity. The SCL-90-R effectively discriminates between disorder categories of the structured Clinical Interview for the DSM III-R and the Hamilton Rating Scale for depression.

Independent and control variables for the job insecure workers included job insecurity, measured using a four point Likert-type scale; demographic variables, including age, race, number of children, gender and marital status; and a financial difficulty scale, measured using a 5-point Likert type scale developed by Conger and Elder (1994), ranging from "none" to "a great deal of difficulty" paying bills each month.

Analysis
Multiple regression analysis at baseline examined differential effects of perceived job insecurity on depression and anxiety, simultaneously controlling for demographics and financial difficulty. Longitudinal analyses are depicted graphically to show the trends in the measures of depression and anxiety at six-month intervals over a three and a half-year period of time, and to assess for the possibility of cumulative distress related to chronic job insecurity. Depression and anxiety were compared with the levels of job insecurity and financial difficulty over the same time period. Financial difficulty is included in the analysis to control for rival hypotheses that trends in depression and anxiety levels over time may actually result from
financial difficulty rather than perceived job insecurity. Paired sample T-tests are used to examine the data for significant differences between each of the data collection points over the three and a half year study.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 present the demographic characteristics of workers in our sample and the scores on depression, anxiety, financial difficulty and job insecurity at baseline. In this sample, the workers were, on average, middle-aged (38.8 years old), with approximately one child in the home. Almost 70% of the sample were married or had a partner living in the home, and the average education was just under a high school diploma. Ninety percent of the sample were white females. Approximately half of all respondents reported some to a great deal of financial difficulty and almost 2/3 of the sample experienced perceived job insecurity.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Job Insecure Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender: % Female</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Male</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% White</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Asian American</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Other</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Married or Cohabiting</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Single, Divorced, Widowed</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Number Children</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Education</td>
<td>11.7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>38.8 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Depression, Anxiety, Financial difficulty and Job Insecurity at Baseline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent or Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Depression Score</td>
<td>62.45*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Anxiety Score</td>
<td>60.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Reporting Financial Difficulty</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Reporting Job Insecurity</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> 62 consistent with clinical depression

The first research question examines whether job insecurity, financial difficulty, and demographic characteristics are significantly related to depression and anxiety levels of workers. Since over 60% of our sample experienced job insecurity at baseline, we begin the analysis with the point at which job insecurity is high. Bivariate correlations were run first to assess significant relationships between the independent and dependent variables (not shown). Those variables found significant were included in the multiple regression model, simultaneously controlling for the effects of the other independent variables in the model. Table 3 shows the significant variables in the model, with their unstandardized and standardized beta coefficients.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Models Predicting Anxiety and Depression for Insecure Workers at Baseline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variable Anxiety</th>
<th>Dependent Variable Depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Standardized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Insecurity</td>
<td>4.382</td>
<td>.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>-2.339</td>
<td>-1.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-1.70</td>
<td>-1.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Difficulty</td>
<td>5.818</td>
<td>.493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-Square</td>
<td>.332</td>
<td>F = 7.673*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01;  + p < .05
Job security and financial difficulty were significantly related to anxiety, explaining 33% of the variance in anxiety. Job security, financial difficulty, number of children and age were significantly related to depression, explaining 32% of the variance in depression. Interestingly, having fewer children and being younger were significantly correlated with higher levels of depression. Since the sample consists of relatively older workers, many of their children may have already left home. However, the relationship between levels of depression and age contradicts the theoretical assumptions in the literature regarding job insecurity for older workers (c.f. Manski & Straub, 2000).

The second research question asks if there is evidence of the cumulative stress hypothesis regarding prolonged exposure to chronic job insecurity. Figure 1 and 2 graphically represent the sample's prolonged insecurity and its impact on workers over time. Figure 1 indicates that there is evidence of prolonged emotional distress over time, but not necessarily cumulative stress. Depression never significantly declined between any 2 data periods over the three and a half year period. Anxiety, on the other hand, did decline significantly between baseline and six months, and again between 2½ and 3 years. Furthermore, in half the time periods, depression never went below the clinical cutoff for depression (> 62).

Figure 1. Anxiety and Depression Levels Over Time

![Graph showing anxiety and depression levels over time.](image)

* p< .05 between waves for anxiety
Figure 2 graphs the perceived job insecurity and financial difficulty during the same time period. Financial difficulty is included to rule out rival hypotheses that it might, indeed, be financial problems, rather than job insecurity that are causing the rise and fall of depression and anxiety. However, figure 2 illustrates that job insecurity shows the same downward trend as depression and anxiety, while financial difficulty remains relatively constant over time. In fact, workers reported less financial difficulty at baseline when their perceptions of their job insecurity were at the highest point before the final plant closure notice came. Furthermore, the only significant increase in financially difficulty between time periods was between six months and one year, at the same time job insecurity was declining slightly. Job insecurity followed a similar downward slope as the outcome variables. Feelings of insecurity began to significantly decline at the 1½ year mark. The consequences to workers' mental health were varied. Anxiety significantly declined in two out of six data collection periods and depression never significantly declined. At the 3½ year mark the workers were given notice that their plant would close; thus, the sharp increase in depression, anxiety and job insecurity.

Figure 2. Job Insecurity Over Time

*\( p < .05 \) between waves for insecurity;
**\( p < .05 \) between waves for financial difficulty
Prolonged Job Insecurity

Discussion and Implications

Three issues should be noted about figure 1 and figure 2. First, there is evidence of chronic emotional distress associated with feelings of insecurity. However, while job insecurity and anxiety did significantly decline, depression remained high. Second, there appears to be somewhat of a lag time effect. Insecurity began to rise again at the third year mark, but emotional distress remained at the lowest point since that particular period of insecurity began. The third issue is that at the 3½ year mark there was a closure notice filed on this plant. As one would expect, job insecurity, depression and anxiety soared up to the highest level since the first plant had closed almost four years earlier.

The effects of prolonged insecurity did not become more potent as the time of exposure increased, as Heaney, Israel & House (1994) theorized. However, while job insecurity did subside significantly, as Armstrong-Stassen (2002) suggested, depression levels did not. The results in this study are more supportive of the findings of Dekker (1995) and Ferrie and Associates (2002) that indicate as long as the uncertainty remains, it continues to be associated with continuously high levels of psychological distress. In the current study, although both depression and anxiety subsided to some degree, neither perceived job insecurity nor depression decreased to acceptable levels for 2½ years, putting workers and their families at risk for a multitude of stress-related problems. Moreover, during this 2½ year period, workers jobs were, according to the company, secure. Not until the third year did stress levels begin to increase, probably due to rumors that a plant closure notice was being considered.

The fact that younger workers with fewer children significantly correlated with depression is curious. It does not support current assumptions of workers who are hypothesized as most vulnerable to job insecurity. The baseline phase did support that financial difficulty was related to depression and anxiety, but longitudinally, financial difficulty did not show the same long term trends with either job insecurity or the outcome variables. This adds some evidence that longer term studies with multiple data collection periods are important to tease out the
differences in what is actually related to prolonged job insecurity and what is not. In other words, it is quite likely that financial problems are related in general to depression and anxiety, but over time, the changes in depression and anxiety levels followed the changes in job insecurity, not financial issues.

While this study contributes to a greater understanding of the theoretical questions in stress research as it relates to job insecurity, it can only be generalized to a small group of blue collar workers. Much more research is needed to address demographic vulnerability to job insecurity.

Limitations and Further Research Needs

The current study would have benefited from a control group of stable workers, or a stable baseline phase before the neighboring plant closed. However, in the present climate, this type of stability in manufacturing may simply not exist. The study does, however, address some of the theoretical questions that have plagued the job insecurity research. Only one of the prior studies reviewed here assessed more than two time periods. This study was able to collect eight measures at six month intervals, allowing an examination of the process by which insecurity and psychological distress affects workers over time. It provides some evidence to support what others have theorized: that job insecurity has lingering and pervasive negative effects on the well-being of workers, even as perceptions of insecurity begin to dissipate.

Further research is needed that collects data on job insecurity and its consequences at multiple time periods and in other contexts. First, different sectors of the economy should be assessed. Both of the U.S. studies were on blue collar workers. Second, researchers need to conduct studies with multiple time periods, both in the U.S., and in other countries. Because other industrialized countries have different labor systems and greater security for workers, it would be important to see if their outcomes were similar if they collected their data over multiple time periods. This is particularly intriguing since the only other country that did assess job insecurity over multiple waves (Canada), found quite different results than those countries that did pre and post tests. It is possible that countries
providing greater safety nets for their workers may have better outcomes in the long run, even if some of their workers experience prolonged periods of job insecurity. Further development in this area would be helpful.

Finally, more research is needed to look at which demographic groups are most affected by job insecurity. The results in this study were unexpected and incongruent with theoretical expectations.

Conclusion

Perceived insecurity is largely due to factors outside the individual's control. It is linked to wider labor market adjustment to global competition and trade. Successful interventions will need to engage the economic and political systems. If current economic trends continue, the number of employees exposed to job insecurity will probably increase (Strazdins, D'Souza, Lim, Broom & Rodgers, 2004). The pressure on individuals and families is, in part, because of the absence of institutional structures that could lessen the insecurity felt by workers.

Government regulations are needed to prevent firms operating in a capitalist global context from structuring employment in a fashion that promotes greater short term profit at the expense of reasonable security for employees (Andolsen, 1998). Alternative institutional models found in advanced industrialized countries set health, pensions and other benefits through legislation in a universal manner. If U.S. policy makers are unwilling to regulate corporations, then stronger safety net policies are needed to create a sense of security for workers in a volatile market. Corporations should share the cost of this security, since they will also likely benefit from a healthier workforce. Given the instability of our economic market and the inadequacy of current employment and earnings policies to produce secure employment in the U.S., sound social welfare policy is imperative to ensure a safety net for families in an uncertain employment market. "The social safety net should not be viewed as a series of residual programs that become unnecessary during times of economic affluence, but rather as a permanent cushion for vulnerable families" (Rocha & McCarter, 2003/4, p. 8.). Given the increasing uncertainty
in a global market-place and the detrimental impact that job insecurity has on individual and family well-being, a stronger safety net for families may be the only feasible way to provide a sense of security for families in the current economic environment.

References


Prolonged Job Insecurity


This article explores a new paradigm or model for the professional social worker: The poet/practitioner. The training and practice of the poet are congruent with many aspects of social work practice. An examination of the practice of the poet, and the congruence of these practices to social work, reveals a paradigm with the capacity to focus social workers on the essential values of our profession. This paradigm, which highlights the humanistic, creative, and socially conscience role of the social work practitioner, may be particularly important today given the medicalization of social problems and the conservitization of society.

Keywords: poet, practitioner, social work, social work practice
Introduction

The social values of a professional group are its basic and fundamental beliefs, the unquestioned premises upon which its very existence rests. Foremost among these values is the essential worth of the service which the professional group extends to the community. The profession considers that the service is a social good and that community welfare would be immeasurably impaired by its absence (Greenwood, 1957, p.52).

Throughout its history, social work has grappled with its professional role and identity (Arkava, 1967; Berlin, 1990; Dziegielewski, 2004; Kolevzon & Maykranz, 1982; Meyer, 1973). The search for professional identity may be essential to professional life and is engaged in by numerous professions. Defining a profession is a dynamic, evolving process deeply linked to shifts within the society the profession serves (Payne, 1997). Social change exerts pressures upon a profession to adapt to society's evolving needs (Kreuger, 1997). When a profession fails to adapt to its social context, professional drift occurs (Shulman, 1991). In such instances, members of a profession lose touch with the profession's mission, its values, and its modalities for meeting its aims. Postman (1992) has noted that social means of production have changed faster during this century than during any other millennium in history. Professions now exist in a state of flux and must engage in a constant process of creating and re-creating their role vis a vis society. This process has special currency to a profession such as social work, which is not merely a passive player in the process of social change, but itself is a change agent acting upon the forces that simultaneously act upon it.

The purpose of this article is to explore a new paradigm for the professional social worker: the poet/practitioner. The training and practice of the poet are congruent with many aspects of social work practice. Examining the skills, attributes, and values of the poet, and their congruence to social work values, skills and knowledge, may lead to a paradigm
with the capacity to focus social workers on the essential features of the profession. This paradigm, which highlights the humanistic, creative, and socially conscious role of the social work practitioner, may be particularly important today, given the medicalization of social problems and the conservitization of society.

This paper will achieve its aims in several ways. First, a discussion of historical paradigms that have guided the profession will be presented. Second, the nature of poetry and the poet will be addressed. Third, a historical account of poetry and the poetic in social work practice and education will provide an additional historical context to the discussion. Fourth, a new paradigm for the profession, the poet/practitioner, is proposed.

Historical Paradigms For Social Work Practice

Proponents have advanced various paradigms for the profession of social work (van Wormer, 1997). According to Goldstein (1990), social work has traveled down two distinct epistemological tracks, the positivist and the humanistic. These two worldviews are apparent in the different paradigms that social workers have adopted as guides to professional action. Various historical trends and innovations within the profession have led to shifts between offshoots of these two early positions. The scientist/practitioner became a popular paradigm stemming from the influence of logical positivism and advances in the biological influences in human behavior. The roots of this paradigm can be traced to Flexner’s (1915) infamous admonition of social work. He stressed that social work was not yet a profession, as it did not possess its own discrete, communicable body of knowledge. The reeling young profession, in its quest for status, respectability, and perhaps efficacy began to veer from its previous path of compassionate social humanism exemplified by the early proponents of the rank and file movement (Axinn & Levin, 1975). Shortly after Flexner’s admonition, Healy (1917) advocated for a scientific paradigm for the profession, while Southard (1919) explored the possibility of the medicalization of individual and social problems. Perhaps the most significant early movement
towards the adaptation of the scientific paradigm was the publication of Richmond's (1917) classic text *Social Diagnosis*, a thesis characterized by causal descriptions largely adhering to a medical model of assessment and treatment. This paradigm continued to thrive during the middle to late twentieth century. In large part due to the early successes of psychotropic medication in treating the mentally ill, large segments of the profession became increasingly aligned with the scientific model. These ideas continue to permeate social work research, education, and practice, despite strong criticisms regarding its congruence with the profession (Heineman, 1981).

Between the World Wars, two competing schools of social work came into prominence: the functional and the diagnostic schools. These two perspectives differed markedly in how they viewed the purpose of social work and the nature of individual change (Yelaja, 1986). Partly continuing the tradition of Richmond, proponents of the diagnostic school viewed human problems as diseases caused by intrapsychic conflicts. The functionalist eschewed pathology-based paradigms and focused on the individual's capacity to transcend psychological and social obstacles.

Competing with the diagnostic school's scientific conceptualizations, the functional school adopted practices congruent with the humanistic approach (Robinson, 1949; Taft, 1939). Expanding the work of Otto Rank (1945), an artist who broke with Freudian orthodoxy, the functionalists eschewed positivistic notions and instead advocated for a more humanistic, holistic understanding of the human experience (Pray, 1949; Smalley, 1967; Taft, 1958 & 1962). Many maxims and principles of practice wisdom, such as "start where the client is," and the centrality of client self-determination, are functional principles that have been subsumed into generic social work practice.

Dissatisfied with what he saw as a move toward arrogance and omniscience in social work, Krill (1986) explored the notion of "the beat worker." Influenced by existential themes, Krill critiqued the scientist/social worker paradigm as a myth, based not on an understanding of the essentials of human behavior, but on the desire for power, control, and prestige. Echoing functional themes, Krill implored practitioners to work in partnership with their clients towards reaching their
self-defined goals and to eschew the arrogant role of expert. While highlighting the importance of the social worker as scientist, Sheafor, Horejsi, & Horejsi (1997) also assert the need for social workers to use both head and heart when interacting with clients and providing services. By adding the component of heart to the classic paradigm of the scientist practitioner, the authors acknowledge the importance of the intuitive aspects of helping to social work practice. The strengths perspective has also advocated for a model of human behavior based upon resiliency, strength, and wholeness (Maluccio, 1981; Weick, Rapp, & Sullivan, 1989). Proponents of this perspective affirm the importance of human intuition, and recognize the centrality of the creative, life affirming will of each individual (Saleebey, 2000). The client is viewed as the expert and author of her own experience (Lewis, 1996). Still, the scientist/practitioner remains the dominant role in social work practice. Social workers now seem more concerned with notions, such as evidence-based practice and billable hours, than with self-actualization, community development or empowerment.

The Poet and Poetry

What is the nature of the poet and her craft? Poet Timothy Liu helps focus this exploration by rhetorically inquiring: "What about poetry as a soulful experience? What about poetry that can teach us how to live?" (Hennessy, 2004, p. 4.). The task of the poet is far greater than the mere writing of words that rhyme or comply with a pattern or scheme. Jane Hirshfield (1997) described the role of the poem as the "clarification and magnification of being." The poet's task is to document and clarify her existence and the existence of others through the medium of language. Baraka (2003) explores the social aspect of the medium in his contention that poetry is both a reflection of and commentary on society. It is this dialectic that provides poetry and art currency, relevance, and power. The poem is both personal and social, in the same manner that the personal is political. Poetry challenges poets to understand themselves and their world. The poet is called upon to develop the requisite skills to make connections between the simultaneously separate and connected domains of her intrapsychic and social
To define a poet as anyone who writes a poem is akin to defining anyone who helps people as a social worker. Like social workers, poets have learned time honored skills that aid them in their practice. To use the term “professional” in the traditional sense is problematic; very few poets earn their living solely from their art. What distinguishes the poet is a dedication to the craft of poetry. The dedicated poet is as or more concerned with the aesthetics of a poem as with the content or the message of a poem. The poet does not rely upon extraordinary events alone in her quest to make powerful poetry; through various linguistic tools she seeks to highlight the significance of everyday existence. Wordsworth (1979) asserts that the remarkable feature of the poet is her sensitivity. The poet hones her sensitivity to develop a keen understanding of human condition. In addition to the interest in the social world, the poet is also concerned with the nature of the human soul.

The importance of sensitivity, a concern with the relationship between the individual and the social world, a need to comprehend the psyche and the soul, and a belief in the inherit beauty and goodness of people, are some of the attributes that social workers and poets have in common. Perhaps it is for these reasons that the arts and humanities, poetry, and the poetic have held an important place in social work history.

Poetry and the Poetic in Social Work Education

The liberal arts and humanities have long played an important role in social work and social work education (Goldstein, 1984 & 1999; Lowe, 1985; Pumphrey & Pumphrey, 1961. Reid & Peeles-Wilkins (1991) implore social work educators to renew the historic commitment of educating social workers in the liberal arts tradition. The Council on Social Work Education requires that social work education be based upon a liberal arts foundation in the humanities (CSWE, 2002). The functional school, so central to the development of generic social work practices, was largely based upon the ideas of the artist, Otto Rank (Rank, 1945). Social work was viewed more as an art than a science for much of its early development. While social work has lost some of its connections to the arts and humanities,
they continue to strongly influence the profession. This may be largely due to the influence of culturally sensitive models of practice. Such models recognize that practice methods must be syntonous with ethnic groups whose worldviews differ markedly from that of the scientific paradigm (Langer & Furman, 2004). As such, poetic and narrative ways of knowing and helping may increase in their importance as ethnic minorities become larger segments of the population.

Devore & Schlesinger (1977) explore the value of utilizing literature to lend insight into the complexities of urban life. The use of literature in practice and education, also known as bibliotherapy, relies heavily upon poetry as a means of educating and healing (Rossiter & Brown, 1988). Poetry therapy has become an important discipline with many practitioners drawn form the social work profession. Poetry has been utilized in social work practice with children (Mazza, 1981, 1996 & 1999; Mazza, Magaz, & Scaturro, 1987), the elderly (Edwards, 1990; Goldstein, 1987), as well as with poor and oppressed populations (Edwards & Lyman, 1989). Poetry has also been used clinically in various practice contexts, such as hospice (McLoughlin, 2000), medical facilities (Genova, 2003; Leedy, 1987), and schools (Wright & Chung, 2001). Poetry has even made its way into social work education. Mazza (1987) explored the use of poetry in various courses throughout the social work curriculum, noting that poetry can: 1) help sensitize students to emotional practice issues; 2) illuminate key dynamics of human behavior; and, 3) add value teaching social work practice skills. Furman (2005) demonstrates how poetry can be a valuable aid in teaching empathy and can also aid in the process of self reflection (Furman, 2003/2004).

Poetry has been used by social work practitioners from a variety of theoretical frameworks. Furman, Downey, Jackson & Bender (2002) explore how poetry is used when practicing from a strengths perspective. Poetry has also been used as a tool in existential (Furman, 2003; Lantz, 1997) and cognitive (Collins & Furman, in press) social work practice and has even found its way into social work research. Poindexter (2002) uses the research poem as a means of exploring the relationship between HIV infected people and their caretakers. Langer and Furman (2004) employs poetry as a means of exploring
issues related to Native American identity, and Furman (2004) has utilized poetry for the studying the impact of cancer on families.

The Poet/Practitioner

In this section, a new paradigm for practice is considered: the poet/practitioner. It should be noted that the practice attributes highlighted are not new; they form the core of good social work practice. Also, a simple definition of the poetry/practitioner is not provided; it is defined through various value considerations and is not easily reduced. It is meant to serve social workers as a guide to focus their growth, development, and work. The goal here is to demonstrate the congruence between the poet and the social worker. This new paradigm can help refocus the profession on humanistic values and practice that have been important aspects of our history and may be threatened by the for-profit environment many social workers now operate within.

The poet/practitioner: connecting the head, the heart, and the world

The outstanding poet is able to draw connections between thought and feeling. The poet who possesses a mastery of her craft avoids sentimentality. To avoid sentimentality, she relies upon concrete and specific images. She eschews abstract generalizations and focuses on sensory data. As the poet develops her skills, she reaches out to the natural world for images and metaphors that universalize her personal experiences. These images drawn from the external world serve to concretize poems in "real-life." By so doing, the poet creates a work characterized by intense, emotional experiences without having to tell the reader what to feel. The poet allows the reader to experience whatever emotions are triggered by her subjective reactions to the images conveyed through the poem. By so doing, the poet fuses the affective world with the external world, thereby contextualizing human emotion in the social environment. The poet respects two seemingly contradictory aspects of human emotion. Feelings are simultaneously deeply personal and essentially universal experiences that occur within social contexts. The poet understands that the human
condition must be understood through the lens of the individual and the social context in which they live. The poet understands that it is through our minds and our hearts that we meet with and join our social worlds.

As with the poet, the poet/practitioner must understand human emotion and cognition within a social context (Werner, 1986). The poet/practitioner processes a deep appreciation of the importance of ecological factors on clients' lives and on the centrality of working within this context to insure change (Dietz, 2000). The poet/practitioner looks for connections between the selves of their clients, many of whom are isolated and alienated from others, to the external world. In spite of the desire to find a unifying theory of human behavior that explains all human phenomena in a neat, reductionistic manner, the poet/practitioner understands the complexity of being. In each encounter with a client, the poet/practitioner attends to the hearts and minds of individuals who live and function in social worlds. In spite of the desire of corporate managed care organizations to treat the individual as a set of symptoms to be reduced into predictable treatment protocols, the poet/practitioners respects the inherent wholeness of each client. As with the poet, the poet/practitioner respects what is different and the same about us simultaneously. The poet/practitioner not only seeks to understand diversity, but is acutely attuned to the similarities of human beings and human behavior. Both poetry and practice demand the capacity to observe and utilize patterns. In practice, recognizing the patterns that occur in the life-course of individuals, families or groups allow us to contextualize presenting problems, and seek solutions of appropriate depth and meaning. Treatment plans that result from this holistic view of the person include interventions from the biological, psychological, social, spiritual, and creative domains. The poet/practitioner doggedly resists pressures to medicalize clients. Instead, she responds to her clients' right to choose from among various strategies, allowing her clients to be self-determining and to maximize their values.

*The poet/practitioner: possessing the spirit of playful child*

Writing poetry encourages an attitude of play. Through playing with words, the poet knows that she must
experiment. Rigidity is the enemy of poetry. Through engaging in the creative process, the poet strives towards flexibility. Each poem presents its own dilemmas. Through a sense of play that demands diligence and persistence the poet works through moments of being stuck. Think of children building a bridge with blocks. They struggle mightily to arrange blocks in just the right manner. Left to their own devices, they may spend hours in their arrangements, allowing their creative sense and fantasy to sweep them away. Through their play, they learn to create, think in new ways, and perhaps most importantly, to innovate.

Poetry also encourages this playful innovation. The poet experiments with combinations of words, new images, strange and varied syntax to help a poem transcend what it was. To do so, the poet must let go of her sense of what is known. In the moment of creation, the poet attempts to let go of all she has learned, trusting that she has integrated previous lessons into her being. While she never turns her back on the conscious use of her skills, the poet understands that truth, beauty, and innovation often occur precisely when she suspends her rational, problem-solving functions and adopts an attitude of play.

As with the poet, the poet/practitioner has learned a great deal of knowledge and skills. Her professional training has taught her valuable lessons in regard to assessing and treating clients. Yet, individual clients are as different as individual poems. As each poem is a new combination of words and structures, each client presents a new constellation of experiences, feelings, beliefs, and social realities. Each client seeks to be understood for who they are. Approaching each new client with the sense of wonder and play that the poet brings to the page allows the poet/practitioner to partner with each client in the co-construction of the helping experience. The poet/practitioner seeks to learn from each client; she adopts a sense of wonder and curiosity that helps her clients feel valued. To encounter the client and truly know them, she must let go of all her perceptions about who they might be. While listening, the poet/practitioner lets go of what she has learned in the same way that the poet or child experiences the world with a sense of wonderment.

The poet/practitioner does not neglect her training. Skills
of observation are essential to this process. The poet/practitioner uses all of her skills to attend to clients’ words, how they are being said, and attempts to see the world through her clients’ eyes. The poet/practitioner is flexible, adaptable, culturally competent, and understands the importance of holistic assessment and intervention.

Perhaps most centrally to the concept of play is the notion of fun. Social work practice can and should be fun (Furman, 2001). Fun does not imply frivolity; clients present real problems that are serious and cause them much pain. Yet, the poet/practitioner works hard at enjoying her work in spite of having to contend with the pain and suffering of others. She chooses to infuse humor into her sessions, and can learn to appreciate what she actually does; gets paid to be of service to others. The poet/practitioner brings this attitude to her work with colleagues as well. In so doing, she is sought out for inspiration and encouragement. She feels increasingly connected to others who in turn enrich her life.

**The poet/practitioner: respecting subjective and deep knowledge**

To be a poet means to live in the world of the subjective. In some ways, this constitutes a paradox, in that the poet seeks to observe and document observable features of the external world. Poets pay attention to details. In the process of writing a poem, the poet observes the small details that make up an individual, be that “individual” a leaf, a crack in the wall, or a person. On the other hand, the poet understands that what makes a poem unique is the poet’s subjective experience of the external world. The poem is simultaneously a document of realities external to the poet and his or her own internal world. The poet values and appreciates the differences.

Poet/practitioners use a variety of techniques to begin to understand the hidden meaning of a client’s words. Paraphrasing and reflecting both content and meaning are certainly not among the least of these skills. Encouraging clients to think in terms of metaphors, which shall be discussed in depth in another section of this paper, is sometimes useful because it allows some distance from the issue. Gaining distance is an important aspect that poetry brings to a difficult situation. So too, the poet/practitioner must engage in
self-reflection, an important tool of social work practice (Schon, 1983; Ringel, 2003), in order to insure she is providing clients with accurate reflections of emotions, beliefs, and experiences.

The poet/practitioner: seeking the truth

Poet James L. Smith (2003) refers to the creation of the poem as "the distillation of the essence of being." The poet seeks truths about the self and others that not only hold truth for the individual, but offer a glimmer of truth for all humanity.

Seeking the truth is perhaps the ultimate goal for the poet/practitioner. Clients must sometimes gently, sometimes painfully, face difficult truths if they are to make lasting changes. Since truth is a relative term, understanding truth from the client's perspective is essential. The importance of an accurate assessment cannot be overstated. Fact and truth are not always interchangeable concepts. As a poet continually seeks the right words or phrases, the poet/practitioner must help clients sift through a multitude of potential meanings in order to find the one that resonates with a client as truth; the direction they believe is their live path.

In helping clients seek their truth, the poet/practitioner helps clients to explore their own constriction of meaning in their lives. Helping clients explore meaning potentials in their lives is an important and neglected aspect of social work practice (Krill, 1978); too often practice is overly focused on problem solving and symptom reduction. While problem solving and symptom reduction certainly have their place and can help clients in the short-term, developing a sense of meaning and purpose may be the most essential task of living (van Deurzen-Smith, 1997; Willis, 1994; Yalom, 1980).

The poet/practitioner: facilitating the development of meaning

In the act of creating poetry, the poet works toward gaining self-awareness. She explores the relationship between the self and the world. In so doing, she must be able to understand her own sense of values. The poet asks herself: what is it I care about? What is it that gives me meaning? The poet writes to make sense of the world, and in turn, creates a world of meaning and purpose. The poet imbues the world with new meanings that she creates, new meanings that she explores about what it
means to be alive, and what it means to be human.

While the poet strives to create a personal meaning for herself, she also seeks to illuminate meanings to and for others. So too, the poet/practitioner seeks to maximize an individual's self of meaning in the world. The insights that can be discovered in the therapeutic process are similar to the insights one gains while writing poetry.

The poet/practitioner must be very self-aware and must consistently develop this self-awareness. The therapeutic relationship is dependent to some extent on a high level of self-awareness. The goal of the relationship is to enhance the client's sense of meaning and purpose in the world. Since poet/practitioners are frequently in the profession "to help people," they must guard against feeling as if they are the ones who liberate the client, taking credit for the work the client has done. This is not to say that the poet/practitioner does not also gain from the therapeutic relationship; personal and professional growth is certainly an important aspect of the helping process. However, it does mean that the practitioner is much more limited in ownership of outcome than is the poet in rejoicing at a finished work.

The poet/practitioner: reflecting upon practice

When asked to define the type of poet he is, Mark Doty (2003) referred to himself as a "meditative narrativist," that is, one who reflects upon and gives voice to a story. The process of reflection is essential to both poet/practitioner and poet. The poet creates from a place of nothingness. The page is blank and full of both emptiness and possibility. Through various written and imaginative processes, the poet reflects upon his/her experience and seeks new ways of understanding. One method, called automatic writing, is particularly useful (McKinney, 1976). The poet writes for five minutes about a topic, person, or situation without censoring her thoughts. She writes as quickly as possible. After, the poet reads what he/she has written and seeks connections between tangential thoughts, feelings, and events.

The poet/practitioner engages in a similar process during interviews with clients. Clients often come to us with ambivalent or conflicted feelings and disjointed stories that they have
difficulty sorting out. Through active listening, reflection and interpretation, the poet/practitioner helps clients bring order to their experiences by valuing the stories clients share, searching for patterns, peering through the disjoined parts, and eventually helping clients make sense of their meaning.

So too, the poet/practitioner must develop the capacity of self-reflection as a means of understanding her own emotional responses to clients. The capacity for reflection is essential for the professional poet/practitioner (Brennan, 1973), as the self is the vehicle for change. What we often refer to as practice wisdom is dependent upon a practitioner’s capacity to deeply engage upon her experiences. De Roos (1990) defines reflection in practice, or reflecting-in-action as “the conscious evaluation of action during the course of action” (p.283.) Chan (2003) recognized the importance of utilizing poetry as a means of self reflection and as a tool to help her survive the strains of doctoral work. Furman (2003/2004) explores how social work students may utilize poetry as a means of expanding their ability to be self reflective.

The poet/practitioner: using metaphor

Metaphor lies at the heart of poetry. Metaphor, the symbolic use of language where an object or event represents another object or event, allows the poet to evocatively explore the human experience. By exploring experiences metaphorically, the poet allows for the subjective feelings and perceptions of an individual to represent the universal. By utilizing metaphor, the reader is able to project her own experiences onto the written metaphor she is reading. In a very real sense, the poet encourages the reader to enter into her world and make it their own. They seek to connect to their readers’ humanness: to their authentic selves. In so doing, the poet encourages empathy and normalization by demonstrating that individual human pains, while personal in their experience, are indeed shared by many.

Not only are metaphors important to the process of connectedness, but to the process of growth and change. People hold core metaphors that represent their images of themselves, their lives and their futures. Metaphor is central to many systems of helping, including various family therapies.

By speaking in metaphoric language, clients are able to safely discuss issues that are often too painful to address directly. For example, it may be easier for a couple to explore their "broken vessel" than for them to discuss their broken marriage. By allowing time for the couple to describe their "broken vessel," a poet/practitioner can gently move to help them make "repairs" to their "vessel."

Metaphors help the poet/practitioner understand the patterns of life as they are manifest within the individual. By understanding patterns that occur within the lives of clients, the poet/practitioner can help clients understand their own behavior more fully, and place them within the context of the human condition. By helping clients see the metaphorical or even archetypal patterns of their own behavior, the poet/practitioner helps clients reduce guilt and blame. Once these immobilizing feelings are reduced, clients may work on changing routinized, problematic behavior less defensively.

The poet/practitioner: advocating for social change

While some might think of the poet and poetry to be concerned only with personal and private concerns, a great many poets have been catalysts for social change. Since the practice of poetry is predicated on developing a relationship between the external, social worlds and internal personal perceptions, the conscious poet becomes aware of oppression and inequity. Whether sensitive by disposition or training, poets possess the observational tools to comprehend the causes of systemic barriers in their environments; many poets have become involved in working towards the amelioration of such barriers. For instance, poets have stood on the vanguard of various revolutionary movements throughout the world, most notably in Latin America (Cardenal, 1982). The minister of culture for the former Sandinista government of Nicaragua, the poet/priest Ernesto Cardinal, implemented a literacy campaign utilizing poetry as a means of educating the poorest Nicaraguans. In the United States, Poets Against the War (2003) organized poets against the most recent war in Iraq. Over five thousand
Poets have posted poems protesting US intervention in Iraq. Poetry has also been used in ways that more closely approximate social work macro practice. For example, poetry groups have been conducted to validate the ethnic heritage of Puerto Ricans who have been discriminated against (Holman, 1996). These groups sought to help members become aware of the impact that oppression has had in their lives, and transcend the effects. Poetry has also been used as a valuable tool in community organization and the development of intergenerational community spaces (Furman, Riddoch, & Collins, 2004). In a qualitative study of community organizers, Community Arts Network (2002) found that using stories, metaphors, and narratives were important tools in the practice of community organization and empowerment. They found that community organizers used narratives as a powerful way of connecting people to each other within their communities. Narratives are valuable means of helping people from diverse backgrounds make connections between their often very different experiences. In short:

the expressive, interpretive and creative aspects of the arts and humanities carry special utility when dividing lines have been etched deeply in communities. Often with greater power than other modes of human discourse, collective engagement with art can heal wounds, break logjams and build bridges (Community Arts Network, 2002).

Social work is rooted in social change and social justice (Estes, 1997; Healy, 2001). As exemplified in the work of early social work pioneers, who worked to ameliorate the deleterious effects of industrialization on the urban poor, a primary purpose of social work has been to alleviate or eliminate social problems through social action and advocacy. The poet/practitioner must work to develop and maintain her social justice orientation. This is particularly difficult given the oppressive, reactionary forces at work in society. The poet/practitioner seeks to stay connected to the social issues that are important to her and her clients through observation and personal awareness. The poet/practitioner always seeks to place
individual problems into the context of the immediate social environment, as well as the larger global community.

Conclusion

It may seem to the reader that the paradigm being advocated in this article is a throwback to another time, a time when the medical model was seen as merely one practice framework (or perhaps before it even existed). The reader may notice that this paper does not measure the efficacy of practice principles advocated herein. In truth, the authors of this paper are convinced that too much focus has been paid to evidence-based practice and other outcomes-based models. Often, such models are overly reliant on social work knowledge to the exclusion of social work values. This notion is especially important to consider, given that empirical studies have called into question the degree to which social work practitioners utilize theory as their primary practice guide (Cocozzelli & Constable, 1985). Social work values are essential guides to practice. They are central to our profession and our professional identity. We are as concerned with preferred instrumentalities, or preferred ways of treating people, as we are with outcomes (Levy, 1973). In his seminal article, Gordon (1965) asserts that when social workers base decisions upon knowledge when values are called for, their interventions will be misdirected. While the authors of this paper advocate for the paradigm of the poet/practitioner, this is but one that may guide practice. It is essential that social workers adopt metaphors, paradigms and models that are as informed by social work values as they are social work knowledge. Without clear guidance from social work values, we are at risk of becoming a technocratic profession of social engineers, instead of the champions of the disadvantaged and oppressed.

References


“Put Up” on Platforms:
A History of Twentieth Century
Adoption Policy in the United States

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Adoption is closely intertwined with many issues that are central to public policy in this country—welfare and poverty, race and class, and gender. An analysis of the history of adoption shows how it has been shaped by the nation’s mores and demographics. In order to better understand this phenomenon, and its significance to larger societal issues, this analysis reviews its history, focusing on four key periods in which this country’s adoption policy was shaped: the late Nineteenth Century’s ‘orphan trains’; the family preservation and Mothers’ Pensions of the Progressive Era; World War II through the 1950s, with secrecy and the beginnings of international adoption; and the 1970s-1990s, when reproductive controls were more obtainable, and relinquishing children became more uncommon.

Keywords: abortion, adoption, birth control, child welfare, history international adoption, Mothers’ Pensions, Operation Baby-lift, open adoption, orphan train, policy, secrecy, women’s rights

Adoption is closely intertwined with many issues that are central to public policy in this country—welfare and poverty, race and class, and gender. Recent studies show that adoption is so prevalent that it touches six in ten Americans (Pertman, 2000, p. 9). And yet, we often think of adoption as a private family matter, affecting a small sector of the population, primarily middle class white families. An analysis of the history of adoption shows how related policy has been shaped by the nation’s belief in the primacy of biological kinship, as well as
demographic, economic, and reproductive trends. Now is an opportune time to critically examine this past as we begin to confront the impacts of welfare reform, the growing diversity in our society, and increasingly successful attempts to limit reproductive rights.

The history of adoption is weakly documented, mostly in a disconnected manner. Because adoption policy implementation has been shrouded in secrecy for most of the century, comprehensive histories of the topic are rare or incomplete at best. Since most case records had been sealed, historians have not had access to primary sources. Most researchers have focused on legal histories based on state laws and cases. Surprisingly, precise data describing fundamental adoption trends do not even exist. Since 1975, no national organization or government department has tracked this widespread social phenomenon. Data that are available include adoption by family members, estimated at one-third to one-half of adoptions at any given time, depending upon the period (Adamec and Pierce, 2000; Moe, 1998; Stolley, 1993). According to existing information, adoption began to increase considerably during the World War II era, rising from 16,000 annually in 1937, to 55,000 by 1945, and then growing tremendously over the next thirty years (to 142,000 in 1965). Peaking around 1970, at 173,000 it has since decreased in large part as a result of the sexual revolution and resulting reproductive technologies. The recent low point was at 118,000 in 1987, with 2001 estimates at 130,000.

In order to better understand this phenomenon, and its significance to larger issues of race, class, and reproductive rights, this analysis reviews its history, focusing on four key periods in which this country’s adoption policy was shaped. As a whole, these times represent moments during which adoption policy patterns were set (the first three), and traditions challenged and changed (the last period):

1. The late Nineteenth Century, when the first modern adoption law was passed and the ‘orphan train’ movement began as a way to control children from poor families.
2. The Progressive Era, a time of child welfare reform, the rise of social work, beginnings of the family
preservation movement, early efforts to regulate adoption, and Mothers' Pensions as a means to help worthy poor women take care of their children.

3. The World War II period through the 1950s, during which the prevalence of adoption increased, as did the focus on secrecy in its implementation. American adoption of children of all races from other countries also began during this period.

4. The 1970s-1990s, which, due to increased availability of birth control and the advent of legal abortion, were marked by decreases in the numbers of available healthy white infants for adoption, as well as the emergence of the adoption rights movement advocating for open processes.

What the first part of the Twenty-first Century will bring remains to be seen; however the historical trends from these periods aid in predicting how policy in this area will be shaped in light of occurrences in the areas of class, race, and gender.

Nineteenth Century Antecedents

The legal history of modern adoption policy began in the late Nineteenth Century with passage of An Act to Provide for the Adoption of Children in Massachusetts in 1851. This groundbreaking law set several important precedents that are still in place today. First, it stated that the adoption had to be in the best interests of the child. Second, it put the judge in the position of evaluating the qualifications of potential adoptive parents; parents were required to have the "ability to furnish suitable nurture and education, appropriate to the child's nature" (Modell, 1994, p. 23). The law also required written consent of the birthparents and dissolved all legal ties between them and their biological child. Most importantly, the Massachusetts Adoption Act, as it came to be known, began the process of required court approval for adoptions, and foretold that process to be carried out in state probate, rather than federal, courts. As Carp states, the law was critical to the future of adoption policy: "Instead of defining the parent-child relationship exclusively in terms of blood kinship, it encouraged adoptive parents to build a family by assuming the
responsibility and emotional outlook of natural parents” (1998a, p. 12). Two years later, Pennsylvania passed a similar law, and over the next 25 years, 24 other states followed.

These laws were passed in the context of the large placing-out movement, which sought to care for neglected children in families rather than institutions. The movement actually began before Rev. Charles Loring Brace founded the New York Children’s Aid Society in 1853. Brace, however, publicized and popularized it with his evangelical sermons. As such, in passing the Massachusetts Act and subsequent similar laws in other states, lawmakers were responding to the desire of some farmers to legalize the addition of these children to their families for inheritance purposes. In addition, they were reacting to “Brace’s reckless child-placing system” (Carp, 2002, p. 7) with a desire for increased regulation to ensure that the rights of children and birthparents were protected.

Brace was an interesting character. Born in 1826, the son of a middle-class minister, he became a minister himself. Moving to New York in the early 1950s, he immersed himself in mission work, stating: “I want to raise up the outcast and homeless, to go down among those who have no friend or helper” (Ashby, 1997, p. 39). He focused on one of the poorest section of the city, Five Points, an area whose population had almost tripled in the 1850s, and decided to work to rescue children, whom he viewed as a threat to the social order. In order to serve this “happy race of little heathens and barbarians” (Ashby, 1997, p. 39), he created the Children’s Aid Society. Linda Gordon describes Brace’s motivation:

He was a man possessed by a messianic sense of his power to uplift the poor by molding their children into something better, higher than the slums from which they came. He saw children as polluted, the flotsam and jetsam of the urban ships, nearly ruined by their unparented, undisciplined life on the streets. Yet he believed they could be cleansed and reclaimed, and his moralism and disrespect for those whose “family values” were constrained by poverty only strengthened his commitment to child welfare. (1999, p. 9)

Believing that the best thing for these poor youth would
be to get out of the city, he began by loading a group of 66 boys and 72 girls on a train to rural Pennsylvania in March 1854. His plan was to place these children out West in "good Christian families where they would be cared for, educated, and employed" (Carp, 1998b, pp. 128-129).

There were no legal ties between these children and the farmers who took them in. The Children’s Aid Society announced to the local community that a train would be arriving. When it did, the children stood on the platform waiting to be claimed. Ashby describes the scene, as told to him by a Minnesota charity worker:

"The children, "weary, travel-stained, confused," stood one at a time in front of a large crowd. As an adult described each of them, potential families looked them over. "It's quite a shock," recalled one individual. "You feel like you're on display."... Children whom no one picked boarded the train for the next stop. The children sometimes performed acts. (1997, p. 49-50)

The phrase "put up" for adoption was thus coined. The children who were "put up" on platforms were recruited from orphanages, almshouses, asylums, and prisons. Workers went door to door in poor neighborhoods. Some children were brought in by their parents seeking temporary relief, and others came in on their own, wanting to go West. About half were not orphans.

Brace and his staff did not investigate the situations of these children or the receiving homes. He assumed that "farm homes and fresh air" (Pfeffer, 2002, p. 102) were better for children than crowded urban environments. He was also not concerned with the children's home situations; according to Ashby, "Brace wanted to disassemble slum families" (1997, p. 46). Notice to birthparents was not required. He knew that many of these children were not orphans, but thought it necessary to break up families in order to rescue children.

In addition to rescuing children from the city and lives of poverty, Brace was a missionary. While he maintained that his work was nondenominational, he sent most of these children, the majority of whom were Catholic and a substantial
proportion of whom were Jewish, to Protestant homes. Not only were these children mostly non-Protestant, but many were considered racially nonwhite as well, many coming from Irish, Italian, or Polish heritage. Thus, by removing them from the city, they could be converted to the ways of white Protestant families. There was also little to no documentation or follow-up of these placements.

The orphan train placements served, in effect, as a foster care system without payment to the foster families. Not only were the children available to labor on the farms where they were placed, but shipping them out to the country was far less costly than institutionalizing those who could not live at home. While Brace died in 1890, the movement continued for almost 40 more years, under his son. Other agencies also replicated his methods, in Great Britain and Australia as well as the U.S. Estimates of the total number of children placed (in this country) vary widely, from 150,000 to 250,000.

The Progressive Era

Many of the child-welfare reforms instituted during the early 1900s can be traced to Brace’s orphan trains. The outcry against his unorthodox practices led advocates to the other extreme: families were to be preserved at all costs; breaking up families became “practically taboo” (Carp, 19998b, p. 140). In the area of adoption, the progressives’ moralism translated to a preference for blood ties.

The Era began with an unprecedented national gathering: the 1909 White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children. In response to a 1904 Congressional report about the number and circumstances of institutionalized and dependent children in Washington, D.C., as well as publicity around the country’s high infant-mortality rate, James West, a lawyer and secretary of the National Child-Rescue League, urged President Theodore Roosevelt to convene a forum to discuss the problems of orphans. Raised in an orphanage himself, West was a powerful advocate; he succeeded in enlisting Roosevelt’s attention to the issue. At the time, there were some 93,000 children living in institutions, and another 50,000 in foster care. More than 200 child-welfare advocates attended the conference.
While the conference invitation and proceedings utilized Nineteenth Century language around child saving, the discussions and recommendations demonstrated a shift to Twentieth Century policies of family preservation. Attendees declared that children must be kept with their natural families whenever possible:

Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization. It is the greatest molding force of mind and character. Children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons. Children of parents of worthy character, suffering from temporary misfortune and children of reasonably efficient and deserving mothers who are without the support of the normal breadwinner should, as a rule, be kept with their parents, such aid being given as may be necessary to maintain suitable homes for the rearing of the children.... Except in unusual circumstances, the home should not be broken up, for reasons of poverty, but only for considerations of inefficiency or immorality. (Conference proceedings, as cited in Skocpol, 1992, p. 425)

The conference recognized government responsibility for child welfare, and stipulated that child-welfare work must focus on the family as a whole, rather than rescuing the needy child. As Carp states,

In the effort to prevent Brace's reckless child-placing policies, child welfare experts and social workers went to the other extreme and stressed the cultural primacy of the blood bond in family kinship. While they extolled the family as superior to institutionalization, the 'family' they now meant was the child's biological parents, the family of origin. (1998b, p. 131)

Rather than split up families, child-welfare reformers worked to prevent the causes of these breakups. Resulting reforms included establishment of the U.S. Children's Bureau in 1912, creation of juvenile courts, and enactment of Mothers' pensions. One of Roosevelt's reasons for calling the conference was to garner support for creation of a federal Children's
Bureau. The conference brought national attention to legislation already pending in Congress. After a great deal of politicking, the bill creating the Children's Bureau finally passed in April 1912.

Julia Lathrop, a social worker, was named the Bureau's first chief. Lathrop's father was a former Republican Congressman and her mother a women's suffrage advocate. She worked at Hull House with Jane Addams for 20 years, but was mostly unknown outside of Illinois. According to Lindenmeyer, establishment of the Children's Bureau meant that: "the effort to protect 'a right to childhood' was now elevated from sentimentalized local charity work to national policy, studied by trained professionals, many of whom happened to be female, utilizing the most modern scientific techniques" (1997, p. 29). While its initial focus was on helping children to remain at home, the Children's Bureau later became the leading institution for providing information about adoption.

Lathrop endorsed Mothers' Pensions even before coming to the Children's Bureau. These pensions were designed to cover at least some of the costs of raising children, helping widows maintain their children in their own homes. As Linda Gordon states, "Mothers' Aid was a kind of child custody reform for the poor" (1994, p. 39). The pensions also "reinforced the bureau's narrow definition of the proper roles for women and men within the family" (Lindenmeyer, 1997, p. 155). Women were to take care of children and the home, while men went out to earn a living.

Enacted in many states in the 1910s, these pensions were, in the end, severely underfunded. While the intent was to enable "worthy" mothers to devote themselves to homemaking, pension amounts were "nowhere near enough to support full-time motherhood, even in frugal homes" (Skocpol, 1992, p. 476). Gordon contends that this inadequacy resulted from the social-control strategies of the middle-class women who fought for Mothers' Pensions. The program was designed to distinguish between worthy mothers who could provide a suitable home environment for their children, and those who did not offer enough discipline to their children.

In any case, social workers were set up as the adjudicators of these distinctions. As caseworkers, they determined
worthiness for receipt of these public benefits. Social work became professionalized during the Progressive Era. White, middle-class, college-educated women populated the field, which focused both on individual casework and larger social reform. At this time, professional social workers were proud to rarely recommend children for adoption, believing that unwed mothers should not be separated from their children. However, when it was absolutely necessary as a last resort, they denounced unregulated adoption, campaigning for state licensing and supervision of child-placing agencies.

As a result of this lobbying, the 1917 Children's Code of Minnesota was passed. This law, which became the model for state regulations over the next two decades, required an investigation of potential adoptive parents to determine the suitability of their home for a child. In addition, the code provided for six-month probationary periods in which the child lived with the adopting parents before the adoption became final, and most portentously, called for the sealing of all adoption records. Those directly involved, including birthparents, adoptees, and adoptive parents, could, however, access the record.

During this period adoption was, however, quite uncommon. Efforts to define kinship as based upon blood ties stigmatized adoption as unnatural. As social workers considered it only as a last resort, they also had to counter prejudice to convince potential adopters that doing so was not abnormal. These stereotypes were confounded by the rise of the eugenics movement after 1910. Adopted children were said to have inherited 'mental defects' from their birthparents. Unmarried mothers were said to have a hereditary tendency toward 'feeblemindedness' which was passed to their children. As Carp states:

> The purported link between feebleminded unwed mothers and their illegitimate children cast a pall over all adoptions, and even popular magazines warned adoptive parents against the risk of 'bad heredity.' Adopted children were thus doubly burdened: they were assumed to be illegitimate and thus tainted medically, and they were adopted and consequently lacked the all-important blood link to their adoptive parents. (2002, p. 9)
Simultaneously, of those adoptions that did take place, most occurred privately. Doctors and lawyers facilitated independent adoptions, birthparents advertised in newspapers, and commercial maternity homes and baby farms sold infants to childless couples. A 1917 study for Chicago’s Juvenile Protective Association found “a regular commercialized business of child placing being carried out in the city of Chicago” (Berebitsky 1998, p. 134). The reforms begun during the Progressive Era later ensured the closing of this market, bringing adoption more fully into the legal domain.

World War II Through the 1950s

With the decline of the eugenics movement in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as demographic changes that led to increases in the numbers of adoptable children, some of the groundwork laid during the Progressive Era came to fruition in the form of a regulated adoption process. Adoption increased dramatically during this period, tripling between 1937 and 1945, and then doubling again by 1955. For the first time, adopted children outnumbered institutionalized youth.

The reasons for this shift were twofold. First, illegitimate births increased significantly during the period, from some 130,000 children in 1948 to over 200,000 in 1958. As Carp states: “With social bonds loosened by wartime, illegitimacy rates began to soar, especially among nonwhites, continuing their upward flight for the next forty years” (2002, p. 12). At the same time, the demand for children to adopt grew as a result of the baby boom’s rising marriage rates. During and after the war, parenthood was hailed as a patriotic duty. Childless couples were shunned, and record numbers sought adoption; “adoption agencies were inundated with requests for children” (Carp, 2002, p. 13). New medical treatments also enabled doctors to diagnose infertility earlier, leading couples seeking children to move on to adoption. Wartime prosperity also contributed to this trend of increased interest in adoption. Benet concludes: “The post-war increase in the popularity of adoption came about because it solved a particular social problem: the rise in white middle-class illegitimacy during the ‘permissive society’ of the 1950s...” (1976, p. 16).
This growth led to many changes in adoption practice. Social workers continued gaining domain over the process. They worked to make adoption more acceptable by matching adoptive parents and adoptees according to physical, ethnic, racial, religious, and intellectual characteristics, creating adoptive families that resembled biological ones. As Gill theorizes:

Excess demand for young children gave adoption agencies a new opportunity ... to be selective in the choice of adoptive parents. Selectivity was consistent with the interests of agency workers, who hoped to raise their professional status by demonstrating particular expertise in the creation of adoptive families. (2002, p. 161)

As the demand for children was high, adoption workers were able to select the 'best' possible parent matches for adoptees. The best parents were those who appeared most 'normal'; "accepted couples were remarkably similar everywhere" (Gill, 2002, p. 173).

Typical adoptive parents were white, married (for the first time), in their mid-thirties, infertile for a physical reason, active in their church, close to their families, psychologically well adjusted, and consisted of mothers who planned to stay home with the child and parents who shared the adoptee's religion. These agencies and their social workers were involved in actively shaping families according to the ideal norm of the day. This work encompassed "perhaps the most ambitious program of social engineering (in its perfectionism, if not its scale) seen in twentieth-century America" (Gill, 2002, p. 162).

This program also consisted of solidification of earlier efforts by professionals to maintain secrecy in the adoption process (Carp, 1992, 1994, 1995). Reasons for this move varied from desires to protect the process, maintain the privacy of single mothers, and to continue the expansion and professionalization of social work. An additional reason involved the advent of psychoanalytic theory. Freud's Oedipus complex was cited as justification for denying birthmothers access to case records, for example. In early psychoanalytic theory, these mothers were depicted as ranging from neurotic to psychotic; they
became pregnant in order to escape into fantasy life. In order to protect their children, records that had, until this time, been confidential, were now made secret. Carp states, "the result was that after World War II secrecy became pervasive, preventing everyone directly involved in adoption from gaining access to family information about their own lives" (1998a, p. 102).

Other shifts that occurred during this period involved the composition of these new families. Birthparents gave their children up at earlier ages and adoptive parents began to express preferences for newborns. The proportion of adoptive parents who preferred newborns more than doubled between the 1930s and 1940s; by 1951, 70 percent of adoptees were under age one. Birthparents were also better educated and employed, while at the same time more likely to be single mothers. Rather than for reasons of poverty, like their predecessors in and before the Progressive Era, these women relinquished their children to avoid the stigma of illegitimacy. From their review of case records of the Children's Home Society of Washington from 1895 to 1973, Carp and Guerrero conclude: "the turning point in the... adoptive parents' preferences and, by extension, the complete sentimentalization of adoption occurred not in the first quarter of the twentieth century but in the 1940s and 1950s" (2002, p. 210).

As a result of controversy about adoption practices, due to the increased demand and resulting selectivity of adoptive parents, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) held the first national adoption conferences in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These forums discovered that implementation was changing at the local level as a result of pressure from prospective adopters as well as postwar humanitarian sentiment and demographic shifts that included blacks moving north. These trends resulted in expanding the conception of the 'adoptable' child. While previous eras in which the numbers of adoptions were limited focused on finding 'perfect' children for parents, this period broadened that notion. Adoptable children included: "any child ... who needs a family and who can develop in it, and for whom a family can be found that can accept the child with its physical or mental capacities" (CWLA report, as cited in Carp, 2002, p. 14).

As such, social workers began to place disabled and minority
children for the first time. In 1939, the New York State Charities Aid Association began working with African American children, placing approximately 20 children each year during the war. These placements, soon taken on by adoption agencies in many parts of the country, occurred prior to Brown v. Board of Education (1954), and more than ten years before the civil rights movement took hold.

In addition, at this time Americans slowly began adopting children from other countries. On a small scale, Americans adopted orphaned European children at the end of World War II. Beginning as a humanitarian response to the thousands of children orphaned by the war, American families adopted youth from Germany, Greece, and Japan. This initial phase of intercountry adoption lasted about five years, from 1948 to 1953, and resulted in creation of several thousand interracial/interethnic families. The second phase began after the Korean War, in 1953. In this phase, “for the first time in history, relatively large numbers of Western couples ... were adopting children who were racially and culturally different from themselves” (Altstein and Simon, 1990, p. 3). This growth, along with the resulting expanded conception of the American family, continued throughout the rest of the century.

The 1970s to the 1990s

While the intercountry adoption movement continued to expand, domestic adoption reached its peak in 1970. However, the 1970s and the following decades overall were a time of decreasing adoptions, social action, and subsequent policy change.

The demographics of adoption changed substantially during this period. After 1970, the numbers of white American infants available for adoption began to decline quickly. One of the reasons for this shift was approval of the birth control pill in 1960, providing future of generations of women increased freedom from unplanned pregnancy. As Linda Gordon states, this was a revolutionary medical development: “The Pill did not so much change women’s lives as enable them to make changes they longed for. Their sex was more free, their educational plans more achievable, their wage-earning more stable,
their domestic labor reduced" (2002, p. 288). The sexual revolution and the women’s rights movement of the 1960s also made single motherhood more acceptable. Women who, in the culture of the 1950s that stigmatized illegitimacy, would have relinquished their children for adoption, chose to raise them on their own.

These changes were reinforced by the legalization of abortion in 1973. Women who did not want to keep their children now had another legal, somewhat accessible alternative to adoption. Gender roles were changing, women were joining the workforce in record numbers, mothers were working, and marriage rates and family sizes were declining. Feminists advocated for reproductive rights because, as Luker puts it, "Women wanted control over their own bodies, they wanted control over the number and, more important, the timing of their births because an untimely or unintended birth ... could have dramatic consequences for their lives" (1984, p. 125).

This recognition of the impact of motherhood, along with the freedom and activism of the 1960s led to the open adoption movement. Adoptees began searching for their roots and questioning the sealing of adoption records. This activism actually began in the 1950s. Jean Paton, a twice-adopted social worker searched for and finally found her birthmother at age 47. She began a campaign to provide other adoptees with access to their histories, stating: "in the soul of every orphan is an eternal flame of hope for reunion and reconciliation with those he has lost through private or public disaster" (as cited in Sorosky, Baran, and Panor, 1989, p. 39).

After 20 years of searching for and finally finding her birthmother, Florence Fisher picked up this crusade by founding the Adoptees’ Liberty Movement Association (ALMA) in 1971. In addition to assisting adoptees to find their birth parents, the ALMA advocated to put an end to the practice of sealing adoption records and to allow access to adoptees over age 18 who want to see their records. The concept of open adoption was introduced by Sorosky, Baran, and Pannor, defined as: "an adoption in which the birth parent meets the adoptive parents, relinquishes all legal, moral, and nurturing rights to the child, but retains the right to continuing contact and knowledge of the child’s whereabouts and welfare" (1989, p. 207). This type
of arrangement was meant to acknowledge the role of the birthparents, providing them the security of knowing that their child was being raised in a loving environment. Hundreds of advocacy groups were soon founded in the U.S. and other western nations. By 1978 there were enough of these agencies to merit the founding of a national umbrella organization, the American Adoption Congress.

Psychological theory played a role in this movement as well. In 1964, H. David Kirk published the first edition of *Shared fate: A theory of adoption and mental health*. Examining adoptive family relationships, Kirk theorized that families who acknowledged the differences between adoptive and birth relationships were better adjusted. Until that time, adoptive parents had tended to ignore these differences, in some cases not even telling their children that they were adopted. Adoption rights proponents argued that this deception demeaned children, treating them as possessions whose history was owned by their adoptive parents. As Sorosky, Baran, and Pannor state:

> Taking a child from one set of parents and placing him/her with another set, who pretend that the child is born to them, disrupts a basic natural process. The need to be connected with one's biological and historical past is an integral part of one's identity formation. The sealed record in adoptions blocks this process. (1989, p. 219)

Allowing contact between birthparents and adoptive parents would help to heal this rift. Adoptees would develop more secure identities and birthparents would feel less conflicted about relinquishing their children to adoption.

By 1976, the movement was changing policy. In December 1976, the CWLA issued the following statement:

> The principle of confidentiality is reaffirmed as a value to the natural parents, the child, and the adoptive parents. Social agencies, however, should now tell the relinquishing and adoptive parents that firm assurances of confidentiality can no longer be made because of possible changes in or interpretation of the law. Parents who relinquish their children for adoption should, however, have the right to waive their right to
privacy during the relinquishment and thereafter. Once the child becomes adult, with the consent of the parent, through legislative or judicial action, the identity of the parents can be disclosed on request of the adult who was adopted. (as cited in Sorosky, Baran, and Panor, 1989, p. 44.)

At its annual conference in 1986, the CWLA passed a resolution endorsing open adoption as long as all members of the triad agreed. And in 1988 they added a new section to their adoption standards recommending to member agencies that they offer open adoption services. The policy went so far as to state: “Adopted individuals, birth families, and adoptive families are best served by a process that is open and honest; one that supports the concept that all information, including identifying information, may be shared between birth and adoptive parents” (Carp, 1998a, p. 220). Activism resulted in changed policies. By the mid 1990s, 17 states permitted intermediaries to read adoption files, contact birthparents, and ask whether they were interested in meeting the children they relinquished. Another 19 states set up mutual-consent adoption registries, where birthparents and adoptees could register; and six states authorized release of confidential information without a registry, when both the adoptee and birthmother consent.

Another change that occurred during this period also related to the changing demographics and culture of the time. Due the sharp decline in white infants available for adoption, definitions of adoptable children continued to expand. Children with disabilities were increasingly placed, and minority youngsters were adopted in record numbers. Social workers aggressively recruited adoptive families for African American children. Transracial adoptions peaked in 1971. In response, in 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers denounced the policy. As the organization’s former president stated: “it is their [white families’] aim to raise black children with white minds” (as cited in Waldman and Caplan, 1994, p. 64.). Coming out of a time of black nationalism, they were concerned that white parents were not capable of raising black children with a sense of racial pride and culture. As a result of this controversial statement, transracial adoptions
fell 39 percent that year. These unions continued to decline sharply, and by 1991 most state and private agencies enforced same-race placement requirements.

Similar issues arose regarding Native American children, and, in 1978, Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act mandating attempted placement of these children in Native American homes. The act was in response to public outcry because by 1978 over 90 percent of adopted Native American children resided in white homes. A collection of essays entitled *The destruction of American Indian families* (Unger, 1977) attacked these placements as cultural and legal genocide. As with African American children, activists were concerned that these children would grow up without a sense of their heritage.

At the same time, bi-cultural families continued to increase, as a result of intercountry adoption. Because of the shortage of white American infants, adoptive parents began to turn more and more to children in other countries to complete their families. International adoption grew throughout the 1970s, doubling from under 2,500 in 1970 to over 5,000 in 1980. By 1987 the number had again doubled, to over 10,000 (Altstein and Simon, 1990, p. 14-16). Throughout this period, the majority of these adoptions took place in Korea. According to Altstein and Simon, these adoptions represented a direct response to policies opposing transracial adoption:

> With opposition to transracial adoption remaining strong, and the general unavailability of infants of any color continuing, many white couples ‘discovered’ that healthy, usually nonwhite, foreign-born infants were available for adoption in their native countries. Not only could a family adopt a healthy infant, but the overall cost ... was often lower than the cost of a domestic one, and it usually took less time. (1990, p. 183)

Intercountry adoption was not, however, without controversy. Just as black organizations in this country viewed transracial adoption as an expression of white racism, so did many underdeveloped countries characterize international adoption as American imperialism. Particularly troubling was Operation Babylift in 1975 (Dolgin and Franco, 2002; Martin,
Through this policy, more than 3,300 Amerasian children were airlifted out of Vietnam at the end of the war. Many of these children were not orphans.

Concerned that children fathered by American soldiers were in particular danger, their mothers were convinced by American social workers that they would be better off in the U.S. Coming at the end of a controversial war, many thought Operation Babylift was a desperate attempt on the part of the government to garner sympathy and improve public opinion. In a horrific tragedy, the first plane out of Vietnam crashed, killing some 140 people, most of whom were children under two years of age.

When it was discovered that many of the children had parents in Vietnam, a class action lawsuit was filed against Secretary of State Kissinger, the federal government, and the adoption agencies. The case was eventually dismissed and the few records that existed were sealed. In the end, only twelve children were reunited with their mothers. Without records, finding birthparents was virtually impossible.

Finally, in terms of American-born children, the 1970s to the 1990s were marked by attempts to increase adoption of children in foster care. In 1980, Congress passed the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, providing partial subsidies of special-needs adoptions. One of the first federal laws addressing adoption policy, it required that child-welfare agencies provide stable homes for children in long-term foster care, either by reunifying them with their birthfamilies or placing them for adoption. The federal government reimbursed states for 50 percent of the cost of any subsidy programs. This law was later followed by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which aimed to increase adoption of waiting children. Both of these policies represented a paradigm shift from the century’s earlier focus on family preservation toward a policy promoting adoption.

Contemporary Implications

Over the course of the century adoption became officially established, changing from “an elitist institution that restricted the children available to a practice that includes foreign, older,
physically and mentally disabled, and HIV-positive children” (Carp, 2002, pp. 19-20). During this time, policies shifted from informal, yet open placement, to closeted and regulated personal histories, and back to a middle ground of standardized processes that allow more openness. Adoption policy shifted in accordance with the country’s mores and demographics. As limited supports were made available to poor mothers, reproductive controls more obtainable, and single parenting more socially acceptable, relinquishing children became more uncommon. Consequently, adoptive parents sought out more types of children—older, nonwhite, nonAmerican, and with special needs. The results of these trends can be seen in current policy.

A recent threat to poverty supports came in the form of Newt Gingrich’s call for a return to orphanages. Upon assuming the role of Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1995, Gingrich suggested placing children of teen mothers in orphanages if they could not support their children. Under welfare reform, the children of poor single mothers who cannot afford to raise them should be institutionalized. The public responded with horror, yet, ultimately, welfare reform will force some mothers to place their children for adoption. While this conversation was dismissed relatively quickly, it indicates the centrality of the issue of adoption to questions of family and poverty. Adoption policy is critically important to current and future issues of family, race, class, and child welfare. Studies of the history of adoption must be promulgated in order to ensure that we do not make policy based upon a lack of understanding of the past. For example, Gingrich assumed that orphanages would be cheaper than welfare payments; in fact, Mothers’ Pensions were enacted as cost saving measures with the opposite goal. Research could help to determine whether either implementation would save money.

Adoption policy is changing with technology. Recent infertility treatment options include embryo adoption. This technology entails the potential growth of an embryo resulting from another couple’s egg and sperm, in the patient’s uterus. This form of adoption would, most likely though not necessarily, be completely closed as the ‘(birth)parents’ might not even be aware of the child’s existence. Yet, the ethical and policy
implications of these sorts of treatments need to be considered, particularly in light of this country's history of secrecy and disclosure (Glazer, 2001).

While technological advancements in the area of infertility treatments may lead to reductions in the number of adoptions, the potential repeal of abortion rights could have the opposite effect. Without the option of abortion, many more (white) American infants could become available for adoption, thus shifting the demographics of adoptive families, as well as the 'market' for adoptable babies, increasing the 'supply' during a period of decreasing 'demand'.

Finally, adoption issues can never be separated from class, income, and race. In most cases, people who can afford to do so spend exorbitant sums of money to adopt children whose parents do not have enough money to raise them. As one analyst states, “official data are unhelpful, but the broad outlines are clear enough. Poor countries export children to rich ones, black parents to white, poor parents to better off” (Pascall, 1984, p. 16). In studying adoption policy, we must look at these broader issues. Ideally, we should be working toward creation of a system that enables homes for all children in which their material and emotional needs are met. Achieving this end involves not only creation of a just and affordable adoption system, but more importantly, development of policies that provide families with the supports necessary to care for their dependents.

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Altruism or Self-interest?
Social Spending and the Life Course

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The primacy of self-interested individuals is often regarded as the appropriate basis for US social spending decisions. One thread of this argument has advanced age-based self-interest and politically powerful elderly to explain why Social Security and Medicare have thrived in a policy environment that has seen retrenchment in other programs. We argue that crude self-interest and individual programs considered in isolation are insufficient to understand social spending preferences. We use General Social Survey data to contrast conventional and critical explanations for understanding the role of age in preferences for social spending. Factor analyses demonstrate that social spending preferences cluster into conceptually distinctive domains. This supports our argument that social spending orientations are more complex than conventional analyses of age-based preferences for single-issue discrete programs like education, welfare or Social Security suggest. Overemphasis on age group differences misconstrues the role of age in spending orientations and whether preferences are more plausibly labeled as self-interested or altruistic. Considering how age, period and cohorts differences impact social spending domains improves understanding of how the life course influences social spending preferences.

Keywords: aged-politics, social policy, altruism

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Since the mid-1970s, most domestic federal social spending in the United States has been under siege. Critics of government’s role in providing public goods and services have argued that all social spending must be retrenched. Within this antistatist political climate (Quadagno and Street 2005), social welfare programs (such as the former Aid For Families with Dependent Children, now replaced by Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) targeted toward poor children and working age citizens have been particularly hard hit by retrenchment and budget cuts (Mink 1998; Marmor, Cook and Scher 1997; Estes, Linkins, and Binney 1996). During the same period and despite claims by some that the ‘welfare state for the elderly’ (Myles 1989) is unaffordable (Lamm 1999; Howe 1997; Peterson 1994) cuts to broad-based programs like Social Security and Medicare have been made only at the margins. Despite recent political rhetoric urging partial privatization of those programs (Quadagno and Street 2006), spending on these two age-based programs dwarfs federal spending on all other domestic social programs combined (United States House of Representatives 2004).

A relatively straightforward way to interpret recent social spending trajectories is to adopt a conventional analytic approach that asserts self-interest based on single issue politics—like support for public education or opposition to welfare—as the foundation for spending preferences (see Campbell 2002; MacManus 1996). Certainly, individuals can identify particular programs they favor or dislike, even when they are uncertain of program details and specifics (Kuklinski, Quirk, Schweider, and Rich 1998). A more holistic approach to understanding social spending preference structures, however, would account for generalized orientations towards types of social spending rather than assessing particular social programs in isolation (Kohli 1996). In contrast to assumptions that each program elicits a specific, isolated spending preference response, we argue that orientations towards social spending are more diffuse and generalized than age-based, single-issue analyses suggest (see also Street and Cossman 2006). People do not form preferences for social spending in a programmatic vacuum, but rather express support for related types of spending in a more general way. Consequently, considering
spending domains representing similar social programs will be more useful than single-issue analyses for understanding citizens' orientations towards social spending.

Our research uses two analytic devices to explore the complex interrelationships among individuals' preferences for social spending, age, and other temporal influences. First, we conduct theoretically informed factor analyses of General Social Survey (GSS) social spending items to verify hypothesized spending preference domains. Three domains—universal, targeted, and infrastructure—are conceptualized based on assumptions from critical gerontology and political economy about how "average citizens" might perceive benefits derived from each spending domain. Because factor analysis demonstrates that hypothesized social spending preferences cluster predictably, we can use the resulting domains to analyze generalized social spending preference structures rather than considering programs in isolation. This approach offers a more holistic analysis of social welfare orientations than does a program-by-program analytic approach.

Second, we use multiple administrations of the GSS to construct age groups and birth cohorts to assess potential temporal influences on orientations towards social spending. The conventional view that social spending preferences are exclusively derived from individuals' self-interested behavior is contrasted with the critical life course perspective (see Williamson, McNamara and Howling 2003 for an excellent discussion of this topic). This perspective suggests that social spending often represents broad-based interests that can be interpreted, in part, as altruistic orientations toward general welfare among citizens. Thus, we explore the empirical foundation of a potential "politics of aging" by evaluating levels of support for social spending domains across age groups, periods and cohorts. These analyses also allow us to assess the plausibility of characterizing spending preferences as 'self-interested' or 'altruistic.'

Age and Spending Preferences

Age, if expressed either as a unifying or discriminating factor, matters in the policymaking arena and may be a
mobilizing influence in political contexts (Silverstein, Angelelli, and Parrott 2001; MacManus 1996; Rosenbaum and Button 1993). Proponents of the politics of aging position hold that (old) age is expressed as political self-interest that inoculates programs such as Social Security and health care against spending cuts, because they benefit the elderly directly (see Wallace et al. 1991). This model casts elderly Americans as a homogeneous, political power bloc of almost mythic proportions, winning political contests that further their own interests at the expense of other age groups (Howe 1997; Peterson 1994; Preston 1984).

Others reject this attribution of senior power as overly simplified (Williamson et al. 2003; Binstock and Quadagno 2001; Binstock and Day 1996; Street and Quadagno 1993; Wallace et al. 1991). Instead, political economists and critical gerontologists focus on historically specific institutions, policy contexts, and motivations, which differentially empower or constrain various subgroups of political actors. Such critical perspectives underscore heterogeneity among elderly Americans—indeed, among individuals in all age groups—and call into question whether there is a politics of aging where social spending preferences are concerned (Street and Cossman 2006; Williamson et al. 2003; Estes 1991). Critical perspectives emphasize instead how broad-based social spending reflects middle class incorporation (Street 1997; Street and Quadagno 1993) that garners cross-class and intergenerational political support. In contrast, narrowly targeted social assistance spending often stigmatizes beneficiaries and is vulnerable to retrenchment due to socio-political cleavages and political unpopularity. Furthermore, political economists and critical gerontologists argue that political identities, cleavages, and meanings are historically-specific social constructions transformed at the intersection of social, political, and economic institutions and are not especially conditioned by age or aging (Street and Cossman 2006; Street 1997; Binstock and Day 1996; Estes et al 1996; Street and Quadagno 1993).

Thus, conventional politics of aging and critical life course perspectives offer competing worldviews for the roles age, self-interest, and altruism play in the politics of social spending, and whether spending preferences plausibly apply to single issue or more generalized spending orientations. A politics of
Altruism or Self-Interest?

Aging model regards elderly citizens as an effective political force, self-interested enough as Social Security and Medicare beneficiaries to protect those programs and advance their own welfare, while simultaneously begrudging support for policies addressing the needs of citizens of other ages (Lamm 1999; Howe 1997; Peterson 1994). In contrast, the critical life course perspective emphasizes how broad-based programs like public pensions and public education generate political support among diverse groups of citizens. It assumes that political actors are complex, so that beyond self-interest they may also express other-regarding preferences—altruism—and be willing to share the costs of social programs, even when spending has no obvious direct benefit to them (Street and Cossman 2006; Metz 2002; Street and Ginn 2001; Walker and Naegele 1999; Street and Quadagno 1993; Minkler 1991).

Individualists and Collectivists

The contrasting views of conventional and political economy models of social spending preferences embody fundamentally different moral economy assumptions—differences in worldviews and in collectively shared moral assumptions underlying norms of reciprocity in which the American economy and political processes are grounded (Minkler and Cole 1997). The individualist or "exchange value" form of moral economy views reciprocity as appropriately bounded within kin relations and grounded in market exchange for "advantage or profit in individual transactions" (Hendricks and Leedham 1991:56), consistent with the self-interest assumptions of conventional politics of aging analyses. The individualist tradition regards general welfare derived from market outcomes and within families as almost always superior to any type of state provision. Social spending beyond targeted, subsistence poverty relief to alleviate market failures is regarded as undesirable because it risks undermining individual freedom, work effort, and family values. Rather than collective provision through welfare state programs, adherents to an individualist moral economy generally favor social welfare and public goods derived through individual thrift and voluntary arrangements. The core focus of the individualist orientation is
on political actors motivated by self-interest.

Critical gerontologists and political economists regard the individualist perspective as an overly simplified framework for understanding the intersection between age and politics. This more critical life course perspective attributes political support for social programs—whether for a specific one like Social Security, or for more diffuse spending on general categories of education and health care—to much broader bases than merely age-based or self-interested ones. The collectivist moral economy is grounded in meeting human needs through social arrangements created to maximize life chances for all members of society over time, given resource constraints (Minkler and Cole 1997; Hendricks and Leedham 1991). Collectivist orientations are expressed in broad-based, universalist social policies that generate what political economists call middle class incorporation (Street 1997; Street and Quadagno 1993). Because universalist programs promote the social welfare of wide swaths of citizens and not just the poor, middle class stakeholders ensure robust political support, upholding citizens' rights to social welfare. Thus, the collectivist perspective emphasizes that both individually-motivated and shared interests, but not just self-interest alone, shape spending preferences over the life course. Within this framework, self-interest may still operate as concern for one's own welfare and a preference for policies that advance it, but in tandem with altruism (as we use the term in this research), expressed as a collective concern that others' needs be met and the willingness to support spending that advances general welfare.

Single Issues versus Social Spending Domains

Many social commentators and analysts focus on popular support for single social policies, e.g., support for spending on public education, cutting welfare spending, expanding Medicare, etc. However, Williamson et al (2003) underscore how important it is to understand both fact and framing to untangle the foundations of age-based political debates. When considering social spending priorities in isolation, the logic that age may predict support for particular types of spending seems apparent. For example, a common anecdote is that
elderly voters defeat school bond and school-supporting tax initiatives in local elections (see Minkler 1991; Rosenbaum and Button 1989). Younger adults (particularly college age individuals and parents of school age children) might plausibly be expected to favor more education spending than older adults, or to withhold support for Social Security because of their youth.

Clearly, such age-based explanations offer a glimpse into conceivable reasons for individuals' preference formation for social spending (but see Street and Cossman 2006). However, such program-by-program consideration treats social spending as radically-separable single issues, whereas we argue that preference structures for spending are expressed in less divisible ways. General orientations of citizens towards social welfare, we argue, falls within distinct domains of social spending preferences. We identify three such domains based on insights from the moral economy framework in critical gerontology and informed by expectations about preferences associated with structural components of social welfare programs from political economy.

The universal domain includes broad-based types of social spending—income security, health care and education. While universal domain components might potentially provide direct benefits to individuals of different ages, or differing positions in the life course, we expect them to be conceptually linked because of their important contribution to general welfare. We hypothesize that what we call the targeted domain will encompass spending mainly perceived as benefiting individuals who most citizens regard as "other"—that is, individuals perceived as different from many members of the dominant community. Because many in the general population perceive assistance programs as disproportionately targeted toward poor and/or minority Americans (Gilens 1996) and unlikely to benefit non-poor/majority individuals directly, we expect the targeted spending domain to reflect the sense of "otherness" that poverty-based programs typically engender. The infrastructure domain encompasses spending on communities and the built environment belonging in the public domain. Because benefits from infrastructure domain components are very diffuse and less divisible than the universal or targeted factors, this domain
has no obvious age-related appeal.

Data and Methods

We use data from three waves of the General Social Survey (1988, 1994 and 2000) that represent relatively distinctive political periods. The six-year intervals allow us to create theoretically relevant age groups for analysis. Conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, the GSS samples a representative population of English-speaking, non-institutionalized individuals (Davis and Smith 1998) and is the largest sociological survey in the U.S. Data from repeated surveys allows for examination of variations in support for social spending domains by age, cohort and period. Because the discrete effects of age, cohort and period are difficult to disentangle (Glenn 2003; Alwin 2003), we caution readers that our discussion of temporal influences should be interpreted as suggestive, not causal.

Age Groups and Cohorts

Table 1 shows the composition of age groups and cohorts used in subsequent descriptive analyses. The six-year age groups at each GSS administration (1988, 1994, and 2000) were combined into cohorts when social spending preferences were measured for at least two consecutive survey periods for each group. For example, the 1959 to 1964 birth cohort includes those aged 24-29 in 1988, linked with individuals aged 30-35 in 1994, linked with individuals aged 36-41 in 2000 (the cohort highlighted on the diagonal in Table 1). Consequently, the analyses include 11 cohorts, since the youngest age group (18-23) in 2000 and the oldest age group (78+) in 1988 had no counterparts in adjacent survey administrations.

Social Spending Domains

We used nine GSS social spending items to construct three theoretically derived social spending domains. We expected three GSS items—Social Security, health care, and education, broad-based spending that directly benefits individuals—to comprise the universal domain. GSS items assessing support for social assistance and programs providing benefits mostly
to perceived "others"—assistance to cities (often regarded as disproportionately benefiting urban minority populations), welfare, and assistance to blacks—were expected to cluster as the targeted domain. Finally, the infrastructure domain was expected to comprise GSS items relating to spending on parks, public transportation, and roads, which contribute to general welfare but which are not divisible into individual direct benefits.

Table 1.

| Sample Size and Cohort Construction by Age and Year of GSS Interview |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 78+               | 156               | 135               |
| 72-77             | 85                | 162               | 150               |
| 66-71             | 116               | 180               | 166               |
| 60-65             | 119               | 175               | 206               |
| 54-59             | 85                | 226               | 312               |
| 48-53             | 92                | 311               | 391               |
| 42-47             | 157               | 372               | 387               |
| 36-41             | 193               | 415               | 356               |
| 30-35             | 195               | 468               | 311               |
| 24-29             | 215               | 349               | 215               |
| 18-23             | 141               | 172               |

The GSS social spending item format is to ask whether the government is spending (1) too much money, (2) too little money, or (3) just about the right amount on each type of social spending. Support for each item is measured conservatively, with only respondents answering that the government was spending "too little money" scored as supporting that item. That is, only respondents indicating insufficient spending on an item were scored as supporting it, essentially removing the effects of inertia ('just about right' responses) from the analysis. Because the risk of this approach is to understate rather than overstate support, the analytic trends shown here represent particularly robust relationships.

Constructing the Social Spending Domains

To construct the spending domains, each of the nine social
spending items was dichotomized and pooled across time to increase sample size. Analyses prior to pooling show

Table 2. Factor Analysis with Principle Components Analysis Performed on Nine Items Measuring Attitudes Toward Social Spending in 1988, 1994 and 2000 Pooled Data from the General Social Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Universal</th>
<th>Targeted</th>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Health Care</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and Race Relations</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Variance Explained</td>
<td>48.21</td>
<td>44.63</td>
<td>43.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the General Social Survey (1988-2000), the questions were worded as follows: "We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. Are we spending too much money, too little money, or the right amount on..." 

similar variance explained in each of the three GSS administrations for each of the three factors, indicating internal stability over time. Each respondent reporting that the government spent "too little money" on a particular item was categorized as supporting the item and scored 1; non-supporters reported
that the government spent "about the right amount" or "too much money" and scored zero on the item. Factor analysis conducted using SPSS statistical software confirmed that the nine GSS social spending items clustered into the three conceptually distinct social spending domains—universal, infrastructure, and targeted—shown in Table 2.

Universal Domain

The universal domain reflects broad-based benefits that political economists describe as fostering middle class incorporation, creating political sustenance for this kind of social welfare spending. Because the universal domain represents large, widely available programs—education, health care, and Social Security—it benefits people from all income brackets, and not just the poor. Clustering preferences for these items result in confirmatory factor loadings from 0.65 to 0.74 and explain 48 percent of the variance in these measures.

Targeted Domain

Poverty-based programs (even programs misperceived as such) simply do not derive the same broad-based support as the more politically popular universal programs (Quadagno 1994). The targeted domain—spending on cities, assistance for blacks, and welfare—reflects spending that many regard as targeted towards individuals perceived as "other kinds" of people, different or distant from the majority culture (Gilens 1996; Quadagno 1994). Many Americans have systematic misapprehensions about such programs, either because they are misinformed about the costs, benefits and structures of programs, because they perceive most recipients to be race/ethnic minorities, or to be "work-shy." Age does not seem to be a plausible catalyst for orientations towards the targeted domain; rather, issues of class (income) and race/ethnicity seem more likely to inform targeted domain spending preferences. Clustering the three GSS items representing the targeted domain results in strong factor loadings (from 0.47 to 0.83); the domain explains 45 percent of the variance in responses to its component items.
Governments spend on a variety of programs besides those that deliver direct and divisible benefits to individuals. Among programs that benefit the general welfare through social investments in public infrastructure are spending on mass transportation, parks, and roads. We expected preferences for infrastructure spending to differ from the universal and targeted domains, since benefits of the infrastructure domain are diffuse and indirect. Confirmatory factor analysis on the three GSS spending items shows that they load on one factor with scores ranging from 0.64 to 0.70. The resulting infrastructure domain explains 44 percent of the variance in the responses to GSS items asking about spending for mass transportation, parks, and roads.

Calculating Domain Factor Scores

We next created a single score for each respondent for each of the three domains. Respondents who support increased spending on all three GSS items comprising a particular domain were considered 100 percent supportive and are scored 1. Respondents supporting two of three items comprising the domain were considered 66 percent supportive and are scored 0.66 and so on. We use these scores to analyze the relationships between each of the domains and the age groups and cohorts. Because component variables load on each domain similarly for all age groups and cohorts, we are confident that the universal, infrastructure, and targeted domains represent distinctive clusters of spending preferences among GSS respondents, regardless of age group or cohort. To demonstrate how age group, period, and cohort membership influenced generalized social spending orientations, we present a simple tabular presentation of age, period, and cohort trends for the three spending domains (see Alwin 2003; Alwin and Scott 1996).

Findings

Table 3 shows the percent of GSS respondents supporting each spending domain by age group, period, and cohort. The youngest age groups report the highest support for increased
Table 3. Percent Support for Three Social Spending Domains by Age, Period and Cohort

Panel One
Age Group | Universal | Targeted | Infrastructure
---|---|---|---
18-23 | 62.3 | 42.5 | 34.0
24-29 | 68.8 | 43.8 | 33.0
30-35 | 70.0 | 40.1 | 35.2
36-41 | 68.9 | 39.2 | 36.3
42-47 | 69.4 | 39.2 | 36.2
48-53 | 66.7 | 40.2 | 38.7
54-59 | 66.9 | 36.9 | 37.2
60-65 | 60.4 | 30.8 | 34.5
66-71 | 59.2 | 31.8 | 37.8
72-77 | 59.2 | 32.6 | 40.2
78+ | 52.3 | 31.5 | 39.5

Panel Two
GSS Year | Universal | Targeted | Infrastructure
---|---|---|---
1988 | 64.7 | 40.2 | 33.2
1994 | 62.7 | 36.7 | 36.6
2000 | 69.6 | 39.4 | 37.2

Panel Three
Cohort | Universal | Targeted | Infrastructure
---|---|---|---
1911-1916 | 52.0 | 32.5 | 38.3
1917-1922 | 56.1 | 31.5 | 38.3
1923-1928 | 60.5 | 32.8 | 38.7
1929-1934 | 59.6 | 33.3 | 35.9
1935-1940 | 64.6 | 35.3 | 35.9
1941-1946 | 67.2 | 36.5 | 38.6
1947-1952 | 69.8 | 40.2 | 36.1
1953-1958 | 68.2 | 39.9 | 36.8
1959-1964 | 69.6 | 40.5 | 35.2
1965-1970 | 68.7 | 42.7 | 33.7
1971-1976 | 67.5 | 43.4 | 33.9
Total | 65.8 | 38.4 | 36.1

% of Variance Explained | 47.8 | 43.8 | 43.3

From the General Social Survey (1988-2000), see page 82 for wording.
universal spending, but all age groups are more supportive of universal spending than not. The majority of respondents in each age group supports universal spending, ranging from 52 to 70 percent across the groups, with a 66 percent average level of support (Table Three, Panel One). Small numbers of respondents in the over 78 age group suggest that their outlier status may be noise due to small sample size (see Table 3 Panel 1); nonetheless they report levels of support substantially below other age groups. When considering all respondents under 78 years of age, there is only a 10 percent range in the level of support for the universal domain.

Panel 2 in Table 3 shows variation in support for increased universal spending across the three periods of GSS administration. Support was at 65 percent overall in 1988, dipping slightly in 1994 when the incoming Republican Congress advocated cuts in all social programs. By 2000, support recovered to about 70 percent.

Panel 3 in Table 3 shows variation in support for universal spending across the cohorts we constructed (refer to Table 1). Cohort differences in spending preferences may occur because unique age/period interactions are expressed in the cohort construct (for example, attaining adulthood during the Depression, coming of age as part of the leading edge of the Baby Boom generation, etc.) (Elder 1994, 1985). There is a linear pattern of low levels of support for universal spending among the earliest born cohorts to higher levels of support among more recently born cohorts. This generalized preference structure of higher relative levels of support for universal domain spending among the more recently born cohorts holds whether considered as discrete programs (see Street and Cossman 2006) or as a generalized social spending domain.

Support for increased targeted and infrastructure spending are also shown by age, period and cohort in Table 3. The average levels of support for increased spending in both the targeted and infrastructure domains are similar, and are substantially lower than for the universal spending. The patterns of variation among age, period, and cohort are similar for universal and targeted spending, but with levels of support substantially lower for the targeted domain. In contrast, age, period, and cohort patterns of support are distinctively different for
infrastructure spending when compared to both targeted and universal spending.

Support for targeted spending peaks among young respondents (age 24-29), remains at stable levels before dropping off around middle age (age 48-52), then dips even more steeply for respondents over age 60. Support for targeted spending declines overall in 1994, a pattern similar to the suppression of support for universal spending in the same period. By 2000, support for targeted spending rebounds to its 1988 level. Panel 3 Table 3 indicates higher levels of targeted spending support for more recently born cohorts and lower levels for earlier born cohorts, a cohort preference pattern similar to the universal spending domain.

Levels of support for infrastructure spending vary only 7 percent across age groups. Unlike the universal and targeted domains, where support was highest among younger respondents and lowest among older ones, the age pattern of preference is reversed for infrastructure spending. Individuals aged 24-29 express the least willingness to spend more (33 percent) and respondents aged 72-77 express the highest levels of infrastructure spending support (40 percent). Examination for period effects shows that infrastructure spending support was stable or rose over the entire 12-year period, unlike the mid-point dips in support for additional universal and targeted spending. With only a 5 percent difference across cohort preferences in infrastructure spending, the cohort pattern of the earlier born cohorts being more supportive of infrastructure spending than more recently born ones is a small but interesting departure from the cohort patterns observed in the other two spending domains.

Table 4 disaggregates support for universal, targeted and infrastructure spending in three ways (see Alwin and Scott [1996] for a discussion of this analysis technique). Panel 1 shows the percent supporting increased spending within each domain, at each GSS period, for each age group. Panel 2 shows change in percent supporting increased spending between GSS years. Intra-cohort change is displayed in Panel 3. In Table 4, net change by period—the difference in support for increased spending between a given age group at time "one" and the age
Table 4. Percentage supporting increased spending in each social spending domain by age group and year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Universal Spending Domain</th>
<th>Social Change</th>
<th>Intracohort Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-23</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-41</td>
<td>63.5</td>
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<td>69.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>78+</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Targeted Spending Domain

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Targeted Spending Domain</th>
<th>Social Change</th>
<th>Intracohort Change</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-23</td>
<td>41.2</td>
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<td>39.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40.2</td>
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<td>39.4</td>
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Infrastructure Spending Domain

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<th>Infrastructure Spending Domain</th>
<th>Social Change</th>
<th>Intracohort Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>36.6</td>
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</table>

Social Change= net change (percent difference) Intracohort Change = net change (percent difference)
Source: General Social Survey 1988-2000
group following it in time at time “two”—can be read across the rows of the table. Change in spending preferences among cohort members are read by following the patterns in the intra-cohort change panel, highlighted in the table.

Broadly speaking, support for increased universal spending is in the 60 to 70 percent range, while support for targeted and infrastructure spending hover around 40 percent. Domain-by-domain preferences are fairly consistent over time when all age groups are examined—total social change is generally below 5 percent for any given time period (except the universal domain which had a slightly higher 7 percent increase from 1994 to 2000). Intra-cohort change plays a larger role in evolving support for spending in each domain. This indicates that cohort effects—the combination of individual experiences and their unique intersections with history—likely condition support for additional social spending, regardless of domain.

When disaggregated by age, social change associated with support for increased universal spending is large and negative between 1988 and 1994, but counterbalanced by an even larger and positive change between 1994 and 2000. Only two age groups stand out much from the others. Net social change for universal spending is relatively large for the 30-35 age group (+11 percent), while support among respondents in the over-78 age group declined 22 percent over the twelve years. However, it is important to keep in mind that the small sample size for the oldest age group may bias these observations.

Overall, support for more targeted spending changes less than 1 percent over the twelve-year period, but is the most variable of the three domains across the age groups. For all but the youngest groups, support for targeted spending dropped—between 2 and 25 percent—from 1988 to 1994. From 1994 to 2000, most age groups’ levels of support for the targeted domain rebounded, with a slight decline in overall support observed over the entire 12-year period.

There is little social change over twelve years in overall support for increased infrastructure spending. Disaggregated by age group, net social change for increased infrastructure spending trends positive, about 5 percent higher over the entire period. Generally, among younger age groups there
were small decreases in support for increased infrastructure spending, despite the slight upward trend in overall support for infrastructure spending.

In terms of intracohort change, the targeted factor is most volatile, having the highest levels of change in support for increased spending, followed by infrastructure and universal domains respectively. Further, the pattern of intracohort change in support for increased infrastructure spending was quite different from either the universal or targeted domains. Intracohort decreases in support for both the targeted and universal domains appear to represent the effects of earlier born cohorts moving through the age structure.

Discussion

These analyses explore some of the complexities of the interrelationships among age groups, over time, and between cohorts for the generalized spending orientations we designated as universal, targeted and infrastructure domains. While disaggregation of the sort presented here cannot answer definitively which temporal influences—age or period, or their interaction as cohort effects—condition social spending preferences, the data are suggestive. Most evidence refutes explanations dependent on simple self-interest, single-issue orientations, or conventional politics of aging explanations for social spending preferences. More persuasive is a critical life course framework that focuses on general orientations towards related types of spending represented by three conceptually consistent domains. Such a critical framework recognizes orientations that can also be interpreted as altruistic or collective, as a partial explanation for the robustness of support for social spending preferences.

Whether each component item is considered in isolation or whether social spending domains are analyzed, we find little empirical support for a politics of aging model of spending preferences (see also Street and Cossman 2006). For such an interpretation to be convincing, self-interested orientations among the elderly towards social spending—high levels of support for programs such as Social Security and health care and low levels of support for programs of little potential benefit
Altruism or Self-Interest?

to them, like education—would be operative. What we find instead is consistently lower levels of support for direct social spending among the oldest GSS respondents when compared to younger ones, regardless of the specific GSS item or spending domain we considered. Support for increased spending in both the universal and targeted domains tends to peak in the middle of the age distribution and decline thereafter. This is true despite the heavier 'weight' in the universal factor of programs presumed to be of most direct benefit to elderly Americans—more spending on Social Security and health care.

An argument could be made that including education in the universal domain masks high levels of self-interested health and Social Security spending support among the elderly, tempered by presumably lower levels of support for education in the universal measure score. However, that conventional assumption is precisely opposite the empirically derived rank order of spending preferences expressed by elderly GSS respondents. They, like GSS subjects of other ages, report most support for education spending and least support for Social Security (Street and Cossman 2006) among the universal domain components. In fact, the broad similarity among all age groups' patterns of support imparts confidence that the universal domain is conceptually cohesive.

'Altruism' as we loosely use it in this context, represents a willingness to spend more on general welfare of no obvious direct benefit to individuals. In this sense, altruism does not decline monotonically with age as a politics of aging model would suggest; instead, the youngest and oldest age groups, likely having fewer economic resources, are somewhat less likely than mid-life individuals in their prime earning years (ages 24 to 59) to support increased spending in any domain. This can more plausibly be interpreted as the age-conditioned life course effect of needing to shepherd limited resources at particular life stages, rather than an age effect.

All age groups' levels of support for more universal and targeted spending appear similarly influenced by broad socio-economic conditions and political trends, albeit from different starting points. No age groups were immune to influences in the political environments surrounding social welfare—particularly for universal and targeted spending—as support
dipped during the mid-1990s when the Republican Revolution advocated less government spending, when “welfare as we know it” ended, and when the Clinton Administration health reforms failed. If Callahan (2005:703) is correct, that we are “heading back to the age of rugged individualism and survival of the fittest,” we would expect when the 2006 wave of GSS data becomes available that a period effect of suppressed targeted and universal spending support shaped by the relentlessly conservative policy environment of recent years will again be observed.

Age, period, and cohort effects are notoriously difficult to untangle, because cohort effects express the unique interaction between age and period (Alwin 2003; Glenn 2003). Consequently, our results are only suggestive. Still, bivariate findings indicate that earlier born cohorts have social spending orientations less supportive, on average, of increased social spending when compared to more recently born cohorts. Such distinctive cohort orientations may occur because more recently born cohorts take for granted, or perceive they depend on more, mature welfare state programs that were less developed or available to earlier born cohorts. Earlier born cohorts’ orientations may reflect their unique life experiences of limited social spending early in life, survival throughout the privations of the Depression and World War II, combined with lower expectations of costs for public provision of education, health, and pensions, expectations shaped before the maturation of the U.S. welfare state. A notable exception to the trend of earlier born cohorts being less supportive of social spending is their higher levels of support for the infrastructure domain compared to more recently born cohorts.

This finding seems paradoxical, given the earliest born cohorts’ propensity for substantially lower spending preference levels in other domains. But their early life experiences may offer insight into otherwise surprisingly high levels and distinctive patterns of support for infrastructure spending. During their young lives, Depression-era public investment in massive public works projects provided jobs and enriched the fabric of public life: creating public buildings, schools, libraries, dams, bridges and highway systems. Tangible benefits of investment experienced over a lifetime, the employment
infrastructure spending provided in their younger years, or a perception among the earliest born cohorts that infrastructure spending might be a better investment than direct spending on individuals—all are potential cohort-related explanations for high levels of support for the infrastructure domain. It seems unlikely that age or aging per se shaped such preferences for social spending; rather life course experiences expressed as cohort differences seem a better fit.

Observing patterns of cohort spending preferences is informative for other reasons. The peaks and valleys in average levels of support among age groups are smoothed when period and age are observed simultaneously as cohort patterns. This finding undermines a politics of aging explanation for the robustness of age-based social programs, since the age “effects” necessary to support a politics of aging model are not robust enough to thrive once there is a “control” for possible period effects that reflect broad social changes. Both the universal and targeted domains have components that appear in conventional welfare state analyses (i.e., programs offering direct benefits to individuals rather than diffuse contributions to society as a whole, such as the infrastructure domain). The earliest born cohorts are simply less supportive of direct individual welfare state benefits than are more recently born cohorts, regardless of program or domain considered. Despite their reliance on public pension and health care spending, the earliest born cohorts were least supportive of universal domain spending from which they could gain the most direct benefit. Whether because earlier born cohorts cleave to values of rugged individualism and expect individuals and families to provide for themselves, or because modest expectations of social spending have been largely met at current levels, patterns of age group and cohort preferences are at odds with a convincing politics of aging explanation to account for the robustness of programs like Social Security and Medicare.

Conclusion

Conventional political analyses assume that interest formation for age-based social programs is straightforward: Social Security and Medicare benefits create material and political
reasons for elderly people to act in self-interest to maintain or increase their claim on benefits, but because education spending does not benefit them directly, they would rather not. The politics of aging—outcomes of political contests strongly influenced by elderly people—is consistent with individualist moral economy precepts. Age and self-interest in program benefits determine political identity, implying homogeneous age interests consistent with a welfare state for the elderly, largely determined by the elderly.

Our findings contradict the notion of a politics of aging. A conventional politics of aging should yield more support among Americans 65 and older than for younger age groups for the universal domain with its Social Security component. It did not. One might argue that including education and health in the universal domain 'trumps' the potential self-interested Social Security age effects that could be hypothesized for that domain. But elderly Americans' program preferences, examined on a program-by-program basis, are higher for spending on education than for Social Security (Street and Cossman, 2006). The oldest age groups report lower levels of support for all direct social spending, whether they stand to benefit disproportionately or not, including for discrete programs like Social Security. Younger GSS respondents express higher levels of Social Security support than older ones. Older people seem to embrace the ideal of American self-sufficiency—more willing than younger age groups to invest in infrastructure, but less likely to support spending that benefits individuals directly.

This does not mean that self-interest lacks a role in shaping spending preferences for elders, or citizens of any other age. Targeted benefits arise, in part, from self-interest manifested in the failure of citizens to accomplish crosscutting political alliances that express altruistic preferences for social spending to meet all citizens' varying needs over the life course. Combined with the fact that GSS respondents express higher levels of universal domain spending support with its direct, divisible individual benefits, suggests that self-interest is part of the calculus for preferences—just not the entire story. High levels of support for the universal domain, with its collective risk-sharing, show that Americans of various ages can put aside narrowly defined self-interest, banding together to support programs that share
risk and rewards broadly, regarding others' financial security and wellbeing as important as their own. Older people likely base their preferences on similarly complex sets of criteria as do other adults, influenced by factors such as political socialization in childhood, socioeconomic status, party identification, the state of the economy, concerns about law and order, and affordability, to name a few. An inescapable conclusion is that interdependence among age groups—the regard grandparents have for their grandchildren, children for their parents, and individuals in general for other people—is recognized in the collectivist moral economy, forming the basis for largely age-irrelevant support of universal social programs. The universal domain creates solidarity between older and younger citizens who recognize the need for collective risk sharing in a rapidly changing political economy.

A more plausible explanation than a radically individualist perspective is that Americans consider their own needs—self-interest—alongside those of their fellow citizens and broader communities—altruism—when they decide on social spending preferences. Our findings suggest that altruism warrants further exploration as a potential motivation for social spending preferences, rather than conceding explanation to strictly economic self-interest. An intractable problem of conventional analyses of citizens' spending preferences is the implicit assumption that self-interest necessarily trumps any other motivation in individual decision-making.

Of course, we would be on shaky ground were we to argue strongly that because respondents to the GSS survey often supported increased spending unlikely to benefit them directly, they made these decisions based on altruistic motives. The fact is that while altruism may be a plausible reason for particular social spending preferences, so too is self-interest. Unfortunately, we simply lack the data to discern when either or both motivations are in play. That would require evidence of a very different sort from a three part fixed-choice response to a series of survey questions. What analysts often claim is objective evidence of self-interest (or what we might want to call altruism) may be understood quite differently by the subjects of our studies. To this end, researchers should supplement future work with more data about how people deliberate
and decide which social programs they support.

Older citizens certainly maintain a high political profile. They are disproportionately likely to participate in electoral politics. They participate as interest group members to influence policy decisions for outcomes they favor. Yet insofar as the structure of social spending preferences is concerned, the evidence we have presented undermines a politics of aging hypothesis as an adequate explanation for the popularity of programs for elderly citizens. This does not mean that age interests are entirely insignificant, or that they are undifferentiated. But neither do age interests appear central to expressed preferences for social spending. A critical life course perspective recognizes that age-based political interests are historically contingent, shaped by position in the life course, conditioned by a variety of other statuses and constrained by policy legacies, political culture, and changing socioeconomic conditions. Age and self-interest, as political organizational principles in isolation, appear to offer less compelling explanations than a more holistic approach to unpacking the myriad influences on social spending preferences. We offer as a corrective the recognition that individuals are likely motivated by the combined influences of their complex lives moving through time (cohort effects) when they decide what types of social spending they prefer. Altruism should be considered as an additional factor when assessing how the politics of social spending are shaped.

References


Altruism or Self-Interest?


The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between intimate partner violence (IPV) and women's participation in the informal economy (both legal and illegal) and their impact on economic well-being. This research was part of a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) study that was concerned with women's survival of childhood and adult abuse. For the 285 women that were in this sample, there were positive, medium correlations between IPV and various types of informal economic activity. Illegal informal economic activity, institutionalized informal economic activity, incarceration and physical abuse negatively impacted women's economic well-being.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence, welfare, informal economy, women, crime

Intimate partner violence (IPV) impacts the economic well-being of victims due to unequal access to household resources (Raphael, 2000; 1999), batterer-generated barriers to employment/educational opportunities (Raphael & Tolman, 1997) and reduced physical and mental well-being (Tolman & Rosen, 2001). The intersection of IPV and women's poverty has captured the attention of researchers recently, especially research conducted around the Family Violence Option (FVO)
Other research has focused more generally on poor women's alternative strategies to make ends meet (e.g. Edin & Lein, 1997), including strategies that have been employed since the Welfare Reform Law removed the social safety net of cash assistance (Hancock, 2002). These strategies, such as bartering and selling personal items, reveal both the resourcefulness and dire straits of poor women in this country. Strategies such as stealing, selling dangerous, illegal drugs and sex, also reveal the ingenuity and adaptive strategies of women in crisis. However, many of these activities put women further in harm's way.

No study has been conducted whose overarching research question was concerned with the intersection between intimate partner violence and informal economic activities. A few studies have addressed the issue in the context of larger research questions (Raphael, 2004; McInnis-Dittrich, 1995; Gilfus, 1992), particularly studies focusing on marginal and illegal economic activities of battered women (Wenzel, Tucker, Elliot, Marshall, and Williamson, 2004; Richie, 1996).

By exploring how the intersection of IPV and informal economic participation contribute to women's overall economic well-being, more comprehension of the nature of domestic violence and women's poverty for this sample was garnered. Cases (n=285) were analyzed to determine the answers to the research questions about the connections between the frequency of intimate partner violence and activities in the informal economy and their impact on economic well-being. Thus, survivors of IPV who generate income and resources through informal and non-traditional means were the focus of this research. This knowledge provides insights into domestic violence interventions, welfare and community development policies and criminal justice interventions.

**Literature Review**

*The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Women's Economic Well-Being*

Economic abuse is an aspect of battering that some women
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report having experienced (Raphael, 2000; Davis, 1999; Raphael & Tolman, 1997). This kind of abuse may include behaviors such as isolating women from financial resources or preventing them from working. Many battered women do not have ready access to cash, checking accounts or charge accounts (Davis, 1999). Abusers may directly interfere with women’s attempts to maintain employment or attend school by harassing them at work, disabling the family car, destroying books or clothes, giving visible wounds, or reneging on childcare commitments at the last minute (Tolman & Raphael, 2000; Raphael, 2000; Raphael, 1996).

In addition, women who have left abusive relationships may find themselves with multiple barriers to employment in the formal sector such as transportation, childcare and other ongoing safety issues (Sullivan, 1991; Sullivan & Rumptz, 1994). Furthermore, women who have been battered may be dealing with the realities of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression and physical health problems (Raphael & Tolman, 1997; Plichta, 1996; Browne, 1993) which may further impact their ability to maintain traditional employment.

Several studies have reported on the extent of the problem of domestic violence on women’s work. Pearson, Theonnes and Griswold (1999) found that 44% of domestic violence victims reported that their abusive ex-partners had prevented them from working. Allard, Colten, Albelda and Consenza (1997) randomly sampled 734 women on the AFDC caseload in Massachusetts. In this study 64% of the women reported experiencing intimate partner violence as an adult. The women reporting IPV were 10 times more likely than the women who had not been abused to have current partners who would not like them going to school or work.

Women’s Participation in the Informal Economy

There is a substantial body of research on the informal economy that comes from a variety of fields particularly anthropology, economics, sociology and social work. While only a few of these studies has focused specifically on battered women’s participation, this body of research provides a basic framework for understanding the range of activities in which low-income women engage to survive, as well as reasons for
Hancock's (2002) multi-layered study of three women in New York City who were facing the time limits of welfare reform chronicles the various ways in which the women deal with the poverty in their lives and the pressures of securing employment. She observes that many welfare recipients "disappeared into the untrackable underground economy in New York City - sewing sweatshops, street vending, exotic dancing, grocery delivery, baby-sitting, housekeeping" (p. 85). She writes: "It was not uncommon for welfare mothers to borrow from others or work in the underground economy as baby-sitters, unlicensed vendors, or exotic dancers to make ends meet" (p. 168).

A seminal study of the informal economy was conducted by Edin and Lein (1997), who interviewed 379 single mothers to determine how they survive poverty. The researchers discovered a variety of ways in which women get by, identifying three basic strategies that the women employed: (1) work in the formal, informal, or underground economy; (2) cash assistance from absent fathers, boyfriends, relatives, and friends; and (3) cash assistance and help from agencies, community groups, or charities in paying overdue bills. Women engaged in a variety of informal economic activities, including side jobs such as housecleaning and babysitting, "dumpster diving," and selling drugs, stolen goods and sex. These latter, criminal activities ranked low on the women's lists as many believed they would rob them of their self-respect they were trying to maintain as mothers.

The Informal Economy and Intimate Partner Violence

Several studies have focused on the illegal informal economic activity of women and have found the phenomenon to be associated with experiences of domestic violence. Wenzel, Koegel and Gelberg (2000) found that engagement in illegal subsistence activities was associated with a higher probability of experiencing physical or sexual assault. Raphael (2004) conducted an in-depth life history study of a woman named Olivia, tracing her path to sex work. Raphael notes that boyfriend-as-pimp is a common scenario for women's entry into sex work. Although Olivia did not begin prostitution because of a pimp,
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her involvement with a dangerous abuser, who was living off her earnings, severely restricted her ability to abandon prostitution. Also limiting for Olivia were her own addiction issues and the lack of intervention by various systems.

McInnis-Dittrich (1995) conducted research with 23 rural women who participated in the informal economy and identified four patterns of participation; the anticipatory pattern; entrepreneurial pattern; the familial pattern and the chronically disorganized pattern. The fourth pattern, the "chronically disorganized" pattern, is discussed here because of its relevance to the research question of this study. This pattern consisted of women who were characterized by their "persistent inability to plan beyond the moment. The sense that life was out of control pervaded every aspect of their lives" (McInnis-Dittrich, 1995, p. 406). She found that women with high levels of abuse in their lives fell into the category of "chronically disorganized" as a reason for participation in the informal economy, often seeking income from the informal economy in reaction to an impending financial disaster (e.g. pawning their own and their children’s personal belongings).

Given that a substantial body of research points to a relationship between intimate partner violence, informal economic activity and low economic well-being, this study sought to specifically understand the relationship between these variables. As most of the studies conducted in this area thus far have been qualitative in nature, this researcher sought to better understand the correlative relationships between these phenomena. In addition, the research sought to learn about the relative contributions of personal experiences with violence and various types of informal economic activity to overall economic well-being.

Methodology

This research data is associated with a larger study funded by the National Institute of Justice (Postmus & Severson, 2005). The purpose of the larger study was to explore women's histories of surviving abuse and violence across the lifespan. Face-to-face interviews were conducted over a twelve-month period, inquiring about a variety of phenomena related to
violence, abuse, coping skills, economics and other outcomes. Trained interviewers asked the questions of the women and recorded their answers.

Research Questions

There were several research questions of interest in this study. The questions are as follows: (1) What are the prevalence rates of intimate partner violence and economic abuse in an intimate relationship for the sample of women? (2) What are the prevalence rates of formal economic activity and informal economic activity (including both legal and illegal)? (3) Is there a relationship between intimate partner violence and participation in the informal economy? and (4) What are the relative contributions and interactions of demographics (age, race and incarceration status), personal experiences of violence (intimate partner violence), and economic activities to economic well-being?

Sample

The sampling strategy employed was self-selection, drawn from three populations of women in Kansas age 18 or older: (1) the general community; (2) those who had received services from a domestic violence and/or sexual assault program in the last 12 months; and (3) women who were currently incarcerated. Though it was not the intention of this study to compare the three samples as it was for the larger NIJ study, the objective behind targeting these different populations was to maximize diversity. In each of the venues, the belief that women would likely step forward who had experience with a wide range of informal economic activity guided this sampling strategy. For example, women who were incarcerated would likely have experience with the informal economy, particularly the illegal informal economy. Since this was indeed an exploratory study, the strategy of sampling a diverse group was appropriate.

The researchers employed several strategies to recruit study participants. Flyers were posted in four communities (three urban and one rural) across the state of Kansas and in the women’s prison in Topeka. Women self-selected to participate by calling the local interviewer number on the flyer or by signing up at the prison. Recruitment and ongoing posting of
flyers were conducted with the assistance of community-based domestic violence/sexual assault programs. Women were also recruited from each community via advertising in local newspapers as well as through face-to-face conversations with women's support groups. Recruitment informational meetings were also held at local domestic violence/sexual assault programs for the purposes of informing staff about the project so that they would be more likely to recruit their clients.

A total of 285 women self-selected to participate in the research. The mean age of participants was 36.9 years of age ranging from 18 to 72 with a standard deviation of 10.5 and a median age of 36 years. The racial/ethnic composition of the sample is diverse with 54 percent of the population being white and 46 percent being non-white. Most of the non-white individuals were African American/Black or Latina/Hispanic. Seventy-three (73) individuals in the study, or 26% were African American/Black and 39 individuals (14%) were Latina/Hispanic. The number of people of color in this sample is particularly high relative to the general population of the state. This high number can be explained by the sampling strategy of the researchers. Because the study targeted individuals who were incarcerated, there are a high number of people of color in this study. In addition, Spanish-speaking individuals were targeted through the use of flyers in Spanish, which would also be reflected in the relatively high number of Latina/Hispanic individuals in the sample.

The educational levels of the women ranged from one year of education to graduate school (1 through 20), where each number indicates the highest number of years of school completed. For example, a score of 12 indicates either a high school graduate or someone who had completed a GED. A score of 16 would indicate a college graduate. The mean score for the women in the study was 12.4. Eighty women in the study (29%) did not graduate from high school or receive a GED. Eighty-one women in the study (29%) finished high school or a GED. The same number of women (81) or 29% reported having completed at least some college. And 38 women (14%) graduated from college and/or attended some graduate school.

The dichotomous variable called "ever received welfare benefits" was used as an economic indicator in this data, i.e.
having received welfare benefits reveals that women have low incomes or have had low incomes in the past. About 66 percent (186) of the women have received welfare and 98 (34 percent) have never received welfare. Finally, the majority of the women have been arrested at some point in their lives (179, or 63%).

Measures

**Intimate Partner Violence.** Intimate partner violence, the informal economy and economic well-being are the three central measures of this study. Intimate partner violence is defined as a pattern of abusive behaviors used to control an intimate partner that may include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, coercion and isolation. Intimate partner violence consists of an overall measure based on a mean score on a 30-item scale, the Abusive Behavior Index (ABI) (Shepard and Campbell, 1992). This scale is a reliable and valid measure of physical and psychological abuse of women by their partners (Shepard and Campbell, 1992). Responses to questions are on a five-point scale ranging from “Never” to “Very Often.” All scores above 1 indicate the presence of IPV.

The most commonly used scale in domestic violence research is the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy and Sugarman, 1996; Straus, 1979). The major concern with the CTS is that it was originally designed for all forms of family violence and does not take into account the context and patterns of behaviors of domestic violence in a patriarchal society (Shepard & Campbell, 1992). The ABI, on the other hand, stems conceptually from the most prevalent tool used in domestic violence interventions, namely the power and control wheel. The ABI scale consists of two key subscales, including physical abuse (10 items) and psychological abuse (20 items).

**Informal Economy.** In this study, the informal economy is defined as legal and illegal ways in which individuals generate money, goods or services to make ends meet. Participation in the informal economy is measured by a new scale called the Resource Generating Strategies (RGS) scale which measures the range and frequency of participation in the informal economy (Pyles, Under Review). This scale is based on conceptual
Informal Economy

literature, and both quantitative and qualitative research studies discussed in the literature review section of this paper.

Table 1 Prevalence and Frequency for Physical Abuse Items (N=285)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pushed, grabbed, shoved</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slapped, hit or punched you</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threw you around</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressured to have sex</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choked or strangled you</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicked you</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically forced sex</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used weapon against you</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked sexual parts</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanked you</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were 22 questions on this scale with a range of five possible answers ranging from "Never" to "Very Often." There were initially two dimensions to this scale; legal activities (17 items) and illegal activities (5 items). Mean scores were obtained on each of the two dimensions ranging from 1 to 5. All scores above 1 indicate the presence of informal economy participation.
Table 2. Prevalence and Frequency for Psychological Abuse Items (N=285)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criticized you</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90.2%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry stares or looks</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90.2%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ended a discussion</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept you from doing things</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put down family/friends</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accused of paying attn</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened to hit</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checked up on you</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smashed something</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said things to scare you</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said you're bad person</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to do housework</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drove recklessly</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld money</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset about housework</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made to do humiliating act</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopped from going to work</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65.8%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened with weapon</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used children to threaten</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put you on allowance</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A reliability test on the illegal informal economy scale showed medium correlations amongst the variables with a Cronbach's alpha score of .71. The following is a list of the legal informal economy sub-scales and their Cronbach alpha scores: 1) Informal selling and exchange (.65); 2) Credit card use (.83); 3) Institutionalized informal economy (e.g. pawn shops) (.57); and 4) Gifts and loans from family and partners (.68).

Economic well-being. For the purposes of this study, economic well-being is defined as the degree of material and human capital that an individual possesses. The combined measure is the mean of three single-item questions converted to a 100-point scale - annual income (categorical measure), welfare receipt (nominal) and the highest educational level completed (categorical).

Findings

Prevalence Rates. Descriptive statistics were generated to determine the prevalence rates of abuse in an intimate relationship. The physical violence items are reported in Table 1, including prevalence and frequency rates. Half of the women in the sample experienced most of the physically abusive behaviors. The most common physically abusive behavior experienced by the women was “Pushed, grabbed or shoved you” (85 percent); and the least commonly experienced abusive behavior was “spanked you” (28 percent).

Table 2 shows the prevalence and frequency rates for psychological abuse. Almost every psychological abuse item was experienced by over half of the sample. The item with the highest frequency was “Criticized you” (90 percent) and the item with the least frequency was “put you on an allowance” (45 percent).

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine if there was any statistically significant difference in IPV score for race/ethnicity defined as White and Non-White. While the difference in means was not significant for physical abuse or for economic abuse, there was a statistically significant difference for Whites and Non-Whites in the category of psychological abuse. The test was significant, \( t (276) = 2.91, p = .004 \). White people reported experiencing higher
frequencies of psychological abuse in an abusive relationship (M=3.22, SD=1.06) than Non-White people (M=2.83, SD=1.16).

Age was positively correlated with all types of abuse. The correlation between age and physical abuse was .22 (p < .01); and the correlation between age and psychological abuse was .26 (p < .01).

Table 3. Formal and Informal Economy Item Frequencies (N=285)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Economy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked full-time</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked part-time</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked more than 40 hours</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got a second or third job</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Economy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts and loans from family/partners</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received money from family as gift</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received money from partner as gift</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received loan from family</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received loan from partner</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalized Informal Economy</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawned items at pawn shop</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used payday loan service</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold blood or plasma</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Selling and Exchange</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swapped or exchanged goods</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold recyclable items</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided a service to family, friends</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold something you purchased</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started a small business</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold something hand made</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used or sold items found in dumpster</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Informal Economy</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote bad checks</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold illegal drugs</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided sex for money or goods</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stole money or goods</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begged or panhandled</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Card Use</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used credit cards for goods</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used credit cards for cash advance</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was a statistically significant difference for both physical and psychological abuse for those who were incarcerated versus those who were not currently incarcerated. The independent samples t-test was significant for physical abuse, \( t (283) = 3.25, p=.001 \) and psychological abuse, \( t (283) = 2.43, p=.016 \). For physical abuse, the means were higher for those who were incarcerated (\( M = 2.67, SD = 1.00 \)) than for those who were not incarcerated (\( M = 2.26, SD = 1.10 \)). Likewise, for psychological abuse, the means were higher for those who were incarcerated (\( M = 3.25, SD = 1.00 \)) than for those who were not incarcerated (\( M = 2.93, SD = 1.10 \)).

Table 3 shows the frequencies of each of the types of formal and informal economic participation from most frequent to least frequent. The vast majority of women have been involved in the formal economy. Of the women in the sample 92 percent had worked full-time at some point in their lives; 86 percent of the women had worked part-time; and 79 percent had worked more than 40 hours in a week at a job. The least prevalent formal economic activity was getting a second or third job, which 57 percent of the sample stated they had done at some point.

There are five sub-scales that constitute the informal economy. The first scale, "Gifts and loans from family and partners," consisted of four items. The most frequently reported resource generating strategy was receiving money from family as a gift, which 84 percent of the women reported receiving. The least frequently reported item in this category was received money from an intimate partner with expectation of repayment (38 percent).

The second scale, called the "Institutionalized informal economy," included three questions. The most frequently reported activity was pawning items at a pawn shop, which 64 percent reported having done and the least frequently reported item was sold blood or plasma, which 27 percent reported having done.

The third scale, called "Informal Selling and Exchange," included seven items. The most frequently reported activity was swapped or exchanged goods, of which 51 percent of the sample stated that they had. The least frequently reported resource generating strategy in the category of bartering and
exchange was used or sold items found in a dumpster or trash can (19 percent of the sample).

Table 4 Correlation Matrix of IPV and Resource Generating Strategies (N=285)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Physical Abuse</th>
<th>Psychological Abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Economy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked part-time</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked full-time</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked 40 plus</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got second job</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal Economy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swapped/exchanged</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold recyclable items</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided a service</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold something purchased</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started a small business</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold something handmade</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used/sold items from dumpster</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used credit cards for goods</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used credit cards for cash adv.</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift from family</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift from partner</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan from family</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan from partner</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illegal informal economy (Sub-scale)</td>
<td>.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sub-scale)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<.01
The fourth scale—the Illegal Informal Economy Scale—consisted of five items. The most prevalent illegal informal activity was writing bad checks which was done by 40 percent of the sample. The least common illegal informal activity was begging/panhandling which was done by 14 percent of the sample.

The fifth scale—Credit card use—consisted of two items. The more frequent activity was using credit cards to obtain goods, which 49 percent had done as a resource generating strategy. The other activity in this scale, using credit cards for a cash advance, was done by 36 percent of the total sample.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine if there was any statistically significant difference in economic activities scores for race/ethnicity. Of the six types of economic activity (formal economy, bartering, gifts/loans, credit card use, institutionalized and illegal), the only comparison that resulted in statistical significance was for credit card use where $t(268) = 2.24, p = .026$. White people used credit cards as a resource generating strategy ($M = 2.07, SD = 1.15$) more frequently than Non-White people ($M = 1.77, SD = 1.10$).

Two types of economic activities were significantly correlated with age—formal economic participation and informal selling and exchange. Frequency of formal economic activity has a small strength, positive correlation ($r = .21, p < .01$) with age. Likewise, frequency of bartering/exchange has a small strength, positive correlation ($r = .24, p < .01$) with age.

Three informal economic activities were statistically significant when comparing incarcerated and non-incarcerated individuals. An independent samples t-test revealed gifts and loans from family and partners ($t(4.56), p = .000$) was higher for incarcerated women ($M = 2.69, SD = .74$) than for non-incarcerated women ($M = 2.25, SD = .82$). The institutionalized informal economy ($t(2.03), p = .043$) was higher for incarcerated women ($M = 1.94, SD = .74$) than for non-incarcerated women ($M = 1.74, SD = .84$). Finally, the illegal informal economy ($t(8.89), p = .000$) was higher for incarcerated women ($M = 2.06, SD = .77$) than for non-incarcerated women ($M = 1.33, SD = .60$).
Table 5 Regressions Table

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Economic Well-Being (N=285)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>Standard. Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration</td>
<td>-17.97</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>- .37**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration</td>
<td>-15.93</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>- .33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>- 4.91</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>- .22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarcerated</td>
<td>-11.19</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>- .23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Informal Economy</td>
<td>- 7.25</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>- .23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>- 3.68</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>- .17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Informal Economy</td>
<td>- 7.97</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>- .26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarcerated</td>
<td>-10.79</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>- .22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>- 4.92</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>- .22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second or third job</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarcerated</td>
<td>-11.44</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>- .24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second or third job</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Informal Economy</td>
<td>- 6.43</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>- .21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>- 4.48</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>- .20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution. Inform. Econ.</td>
<td>-3.35</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>- .11*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. R² = .28; ΔR² = .14 for Step 1; ΔR² = .05 for Step 2; ΔR² = .04 for Step 3; ΔR² = .04 for Step 4; and ΔR² = .01 for Step 5

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

Relationship between IPV and Informal Economy. Generally, there are small to medium correlations between experiences of abuse and both formal and informal economic activities (Table 4). For this correlation matrix, the researcher is only reporting correlations that are significant at the .01 level. There are positive correlations between experiences of abuse and working in the formal economy. The highest correlation (.29) was between
psychological abuse and getting a second job. Thus, women in this sample who are battered do find a way to work in the formal economic sector.

Several types of informal economic activity are significantly correlated with abuse. The strongest correlations are between abuse and the institutionalized informal economy (.31 for physical abuse and .30 for psychological abuse), the illegal informal economy (.32 for physical abuse and .26 for psychological abuse) and loans from family (.26 for physical abuse and .27 for psychological abuse).

Relationship to Economic Well-Being. Stepwise multiple regression was employed to determine to what degree each of the variables contributes to economic well-being. The researcher chose to use physical abuse as the parsimonious abuse predictor because this variable had a strong impact on outcome variables. The institutionalized informal economy and the illegal informal economy were used in the model because of their previous robustness in the study.

The final model had an R squared of .28. The R squared change for step one was .14, step two was .05; step three was .04; step 4 was .04 and step 5 was .01. Table 5 depicts the variables in the model and the Beta scores, which are incarceration (decreases score by 11.4 points); illegal informal economy (decreases score by 6.4 points); physical abuse (decreases score by 4.5 points); got a second or third job (increases score by 3.9 points) and institutionalized informal economy (decreases score by 3.4 points).

Discussion

Abuse Prevalence. There are high prevalence rates of physical and psychological abuse in this sample. More than half of the women experienced most of the physically abusive behaviors. These rates are substantially higher than for the general population, where estimates are roughly that 1 in 3 women have experienced a physically abusive incident in an intimate relationship (American Psychological Association, 1996).

The high abuse prevalence rates reported are clearly connected to the sampling strategy utilized in this study—to include women who have received domestic violence
services and women who have been incarcerated. Additionally, research indicates that women who are incarcerated report high rates of abuse in adult intimate relationships (Marcus-Mendoza & Wright, 2003), thus accounting for the high frequency of intimate partner violence in this sample.

**Diversity of Economic Activity.** The results of this study reveal that the women in this sample are active participants in the formal wage earning sector. The women work part-time, full-time, and overtime and they take on second and third jobs at very high frequencies. They also mix these kinds of formal economic activities with other resource-generating strategies. It appears that women are patching their income together through both formal and informal means combined. Recall that the variable “got a second or third job” is the only economic activity that positively impacts economic well-being. Thus, this strategy, which more than half the sample reported ever doing, is clearly an important way that women push the limits of the formal economy to try and make ends meet. And yet, one must pause to wonder about this finding. What kind of jobs are the women getting in the first place that are not providing enough income to make ends meet? Is working a second or third job really a good thing for the overall well-being of women and their families?

The high rates of informal economic activity reveal the tremendous resilience and resourcefulness of the women in this study. Consider that, in a sample that experienced psychological abuse at a rate of 97 percent, almost one third still managed to start a small business at least once. Though the study does not provide data on the efficacy of such entrepreneurial endeavors, the fact that the women are so inclined warrants more scrutiny in the field of economic and social development.

One of the highest prevalence rates of informal economic activity is in the category of “gifts and loans from family and partners.” This means that women are relying on family and intimate partners for financial support. This may be a positive finding in the sense that it indicates strong social support networks for the women. Women have people in their lives who are willing to help support them when they have trouble making ends meet. The women are resourceful enough to ask family and partners to help them when necessary. However,
this does imply that the goal of economic self-sufficiency is elusive. Also, it might be important to consider whether these social networks are contributing positively to women’s overall well-being. Are some of the individuals, i.e. family and partners, unsafe individuals from whom the women would not be getting support were they not in financial dire straits? In other words, are the women’s financial problems forcing them to remain dependent on abusive partners or family members that are unhealthy?

The Intersection of Abuse and the Informal Economy. Though previous qualitative studies have acknowledged the connection between being in an abusive relationship and informal economic activity (both legal and illegal) (Raphael, 2004; Miranne, 1998; Richie, 1996), this is one of the few studies to the author’s knowledge that has shown a statistical correlation between the two phenomena (Wenzel et al., 2004).

The most highly correlated item with frequency of physical abuse is the frequency of illegal informal economy participation. One possible interpretation of this finding is that women who experience more severe physical abuse are simply more traumatized, less able to work in the formal sector and generally more desperate to find ways to make money. Another interpretation is that women who are in extremely controlling abusive relationships may be involved with partners who are themselves engaged in the illegal economy and who compel the women to participate. Some combination of these interpretations is likely the case.

The Institutionalized Informal Economy. The sub-scale, named by this researcher “Institutionalized Informal Economy,” reveals the connection between the seemingly diverse economic activities of low-income women, namely using payday loan services, pawning items at pawn shops and selling blood or plasma. The correlation between domestic violence and the institutionalized informal economy echoes the findings of Miranne (1998) who found that battered women, in particular, use pawn shops in times of economic crisis. These women were often living in chaos and thus were pawning personal items in emergencies but were less able to do more entrepreneurial-like activities. Such adaptive preferences of the women reveal the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the
women in the sample.

It should not be forgotten, however, that these activities are resource generating strategies made possible by industries geared toward low-income individuals trying to make ends meet. Though there is some policy-focused literature about the new role of payday loan centers and other “fringe banking” endeavors as an outlet for poor and low-income families (Consumer Federation of America, 2002), there has been little discussion in the literature (Karger & Stoesz, 2006). The payday loan industry is a $45 billion dollar a year industry that charges its customers an average annual percentage rate of 474 percent (Consumer Federation of America, 2002). Indeed, pawnbrokers have played a role in industrialized economies for hundreds of years. Though usury laws exist in many states, as well as legislation that specifically limits the capabilities of payday loan centers, the prevalence of the institutionalized informal economy is negatively impacting women’s current economic situation, as evidenced by the regression analysis of this study. The findings show that battered women in particular may be especially vulnerable to the predatory practices of the institutionalized informal economy. It seems critical that practitioners advocate for legislation that would curb these practices through regulations on pawnshops and other forms of lending.

Impact of Incarceration on Economic Well-Being. Of all the variables considered in this study, incarceration most negatively impacted the women’s economic well-being. Women who are incarcerated lose basic liberties that are of value to a democratic society—to move around freely in the world, pursue personal goals and vote in governmental elections that impact society. Women who are incarcerated cannot generate income or take care of their families. Furthermore, having a criminal record can negatively impact a woman’s ability to gain employment in the future.

New Directions for Social Welfare Policy and Practice

Welfare and Community Development. Recent welfare policies have been premised on the idea of “work first” whereby the poor are “compelled to work irrespective of their skill
Informal Economy

level, needs or circumstances” (Midgley, 2001, p. 287). Higher education and vocational training are presently not options for low-income families living with the new welfare policies. It is also the case that while the welfare rolls have been reduced substantially, women are still not escaping poverty (Loprest, 2001).

It can be argued that current welfare policy actually promotes women’s participation in the informal economy, as supporting families on public assistance payments and/or low-paying jobs is clearly not enough to make ends meet (Hancock, 2002). The policy itself may be compelling women to take second or third jobs, or to get payday loans that they may not be able to pay back. It is worth noting that the payday loan industry is a new phenomenon of the last ten years, which coincides with the passage of welfare reform policies. While some research has focused on the increase in usage of such services as food banks since the implementation of the new welfare policies, there has not been significant research correlating formal economic participation and welfare reform policies.

The research participants report relying on resource generating strategies that they are unlikely to report to their welfare case worker. One can only imagine the constant fear and dissonance that the women must live with, concerned that their resource generating strategies may be discovered by a caseworker, the person responsible for their livelihood. Might it be possible that welfare policies and procedures could allow for women to be able to honestly report their strategies? Could income guidelines allow a reasonable amount of informal income not to count against their benefits package? Could social workers educate caseworkers about and sensitize them to the realities of the informal economy? In fact, anything is possible—a point proven by the women of this study—who have survived abuse in part by creating possibilities, some of which were realized through their participation in the informal economy.

Welfare policies and practices could also address some of these problems by playing a community development role and genuinely helping women to get stable jobs that pay a living wage in order to avoid some of the harmful informal economic activity. This outcome has not and cannot be achieved with
current "work first" or strict time limit approaches. Women need help addressing domestic violence and its effect on their lives as well as substantive vocational and/or educational training. For some women, assistance with formalizing and increasing the profit margins of their current or past informal economic activities may be a good answer. A new welfare re-authorization bill could even provide funding for such alternative economic development activities.

**Criminal Justice.** Because incarceration status was an important theme in this study, it is important to say a few words about the implications of the research for criminal justice policy/practice. Recent research on women’s increased presence in the correctional system has emphasized that laws, policies and practices within the criminal justice system ought to be gender responsive to the needs of women (Bloom, Owen & Covington, 2003). This study certainly echoes that need. Because of women’s abuse histories, women need responses in the criminal justice system that will be sensitive to their unique realities. These responses may include sentencing guidelines that take into consideration women’s illegal activities done in connection with an abusive partner. Additionally, the criminal justice system can offer support groups for battered women in jails and prisons, referral services and information for those reintegrating after serving time. Federal grants that were once available to incarcerated individuals to further their education and/or vocational training could be reinstated.

**Violence Against Women.** For battered women’s advocates and social workers who are working on behalf of survivors of intimate partner violence, knowledge about the ways in which battering poses a barrier to economic well-being is critical. Policies such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) can incorporate economic empowerment strategies. Though VAWA policy has begun to take this critical economic turn, by incorporating funding for transitional housing for battered women, it could easily take the next step toward increasing battered women’s safety through formal economic development strategies (similar to or even in conjunction with the welfare policy provisions proposed above) that would promote economic self-sufficiency (Pyles, 2006). Also, because the informal economy is a viable way to generate resources for some
women, advocates may want to consider programs and practices that would help support battered women to make a living in the informal economy. This may involve providing support groups for women who have home-based businesses or community and organizational advocacy efforts that would help organize victims to be safe in their workplaces.

Conclusion

This cross-sectional study analyzed women's perceptions of their experiences at one point in time. Because of the limitations of this study design, one is not able to capture the potentially causal effect of domestic violence on women's resource generating strategies. Thus, to understand this phenomenon in more depth it would be useful for researchers to employ a different type of research design to capture a cause-effect relationship between intimate partner violence and the informal economy.

This research breaks some of the silence on the informal economy and IPV. It provides confirmation to the theory that the American economy is a tripartite economy (Bluestone, 1970; Wiegand, 1992) consisting of a primary labor market, a secondary labor market and an informal sector. Forced by welfare policies to obfuscate and outright lie about informal economic activities, the women in this study have been provided a platform to declare the various ways that they have generated resources. Generating resources in the informal economy is a coping skill for dealing with poverty and violence for these women. It is an adaptive preference that would they had different situations they would most likely prefer not to do. When they adapt their preferences, they are losing their human dignity. To restore the freedoms and capabilities that are rightly theirs, researchers, policy makers, economic development specialists and practitioners must look at the complexity of women's situations and consider the web of factors that are influencing their actions.
References


Informal Economy


Job Satisfaction Among TANF Leavers

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Using means tests, ANOVA, contingency methods and polytomous logistic regression techniques, I analyze job satisfaction survey data provided by former welfare recipients in Illinois. Mean job satisfaction in the sample is high. Wages, work hours, professional status, having employer sponsored health care and being in good health have significant positive effects on job satisfaction. Contrary to popular assumptions regarding welfare dependency, time on welfare positively affects post-TANF job satisfaction. I discuss implications of these findings in the context of policy debates regarding TANF reauthorization.

Keywords: welfare reform, the working poor, job satisfaction

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and the subsequent implementation of state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs have drawn attention to the lives of the working poor. Caseloads fell dramatically after welfare reform (Blank, 2001; Moffit, 1999), and many who left the rolls found jobs (Loprest, 1999; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1999). The work experiences of TANF leavers, specifically their incomes and job tenures, have been closely monitored (Acs, Loprest, & Roberts, 2001). Expected to ease the transition from welfare to work, access to health insurance and child care programs have been studied extensively (Currie, & Yelowitz, 2000; Garret, & Holahan, 2000). The impact of parental employment on
children’s behavior also has received consideration (Duncan, & Chase-Lansdale, 2001).

Despite all the attention provided to understanding dimensions of work in the era of welfare reform, a basic issue has been overlooked: Do TANF leavers like their jobs? The answer to this question is important from a policy perspective, as previous congressional debates about work and welfare and current discussions regarding PRWORA reauthorization have proceeded in an atmosphere of competing assumptions regarding the poor.

A long-held, popular belief is that poor people are unmotivated and unwilling to meet the demands of the jobs available to them (Lewis, 1959; 1966). The argument as it relates to welfare is that dependency on government assistance primarily results from the reluctance of able-bodied adults to work continuously in the bottom segment of the labor market (Mead, 1986; 1992; Murray, 1984). Corresponding to this viewpoint, the PRWORA welfare reform policy emphasis was focused on eliminating entitlement to assistance, reducing welfare caseloads, enforcing work requirements and promoting self-sufficiency, although a provision to create jobs was notably absent from the legislation (Katz, 2001).

While sometimes conceding that welfare dependency is problematic and that reform was in order, some have downplayed the significance of work in terms of poverty reduction, partly because many of the poor have extensive employment histories. Edin and Lein (1997) revealed that before PRWORA many people used cash assistance to complement income earned from employment, a finding that undercut the notion that welfare reform was necessary to promote work and self-sufficiency. Alternatively, liberals stressed the need for a new covenant between welfare recipients and the government, with the former providing work effort in return for job creation, improved support services and tax credits to protect against poverty conditions (Elwood, 1988). Their mantra has been to “make work pay.”

If lack of personal motivation among the poor is prominent, one would anticipate that dissatisfaction with “bad” jobs partially accounts for the erratic work records observed within the low-income population (Glazer, 1969). In contrast,
those emphasizing restricted opportunities contend that the working poor typically take pride in their work efforts and derive personal satisfaction from their jobs, though they may rightfully object to the limited financial returns produced by working (DeParle, 2004, Newman, 1999). Both perspectives make assumptions about poor people’s work perceptions that have not been adequately established. As such, this study assesses job satisfaction and its determinants among a sample of former TANF recipients in one state.

Literature Review

Low-Income Work After TANF

Most former TANF recipients left welfare for work-related reasons. Analyzing data from a national sample of welfare leavers, Loprest (1999) found that 69% stopped getting public assistance either because they obtained a job or their earned income from work improved. Similarly, Acs, Loprest, and Roberts (2001) synthesized findings from a set of 15 federally funded, state level TANF leaver studies and discovered that 71% of leavers were employed at some point in the year following their exits. Nonetheless, leavers have generally received low wages. Shortly after PRWORA, the first state TANF reports showed that a substantial number of working leavers earned less than $6 an hour (Parrott, 1998). More recent monitoring at the state level revealed that median hourly wage levels remained low, between $7 and $8 (Acs et al., 2001).

Mirroring recent employment and earnings trends, income levels among the poor have risen. In addition, the 1999 poverty rate for female-headed households, the population typically most reliant on cash assistance, was at its lowest level in 40 years (Haskins, & Primus, 2001). But income gains among TANF leavers have been modest. In fact, the most robust finding across leaver studies is that families almost always remained low-income after leaving welfare (Acs et al., 2001; Grogger, Karoly, & Klerman, 2002; Loprest, 1999; Polit, Widom, Edin, Bowie, London, Scott, & Venezuela, 2001).

These limited earnings likely relate to the kind of jobs available to those moving from welfare to work. Studies have found that leavers normally gained employment in the service
sector, where work commonly involved sales, food preparation or clerical support (Loprest, 1999; Parrot, 1998). Research has also shown that jobs available to leavers typically lack fringe benefits, including paid vacation and sick days, retirement pensions and health insurance (Acs et al., 2001).

Information about the job tenures of former welfare recipients is mixed and sometimes limited because observations were made shortly after welfare reform began and before the economic recession that hit five years later. Loprest (1999) found that almost three quarters of working leavers had been on their current jobs for less than a year and a third for less than six months, whereas Polit et al. (2001) indicated that many held the same jobs for at least 19 months during a two year study period. On the other hand, numerous leaver studies highlight job instability as a significant problem: In eight states that were part of the Acs et al. (2001) report, only 37 percent of leavers were employed in all four quarters in the year following TANF exit.

Underlying these sporadic employment patterns are the obstacles faced by the working poor. Issues related to childcare have been linked to leaver’s employment outcomes (Julnes, Halter, Anderson, Frost-Kumpf, Schuld, Staskon, & Ferrara, 2000). The disappearance of jobs from the inner city can create a transportation burden for those leavers who cannot find work in close proximity to their homes (Mancuso, Lieberman, Lindler, & Moses, 2001). Health and mental problems are often correlated with living in poverty conditions and could also stand in the way of employment consistency (Kalil, Schweingruber and Seefeldt, 2001). Even when leavers manage to overcome barriers and maintain employment, experiences of food and housing crises are not uncommon (Acs et al., 2001; DeParle, 2004). Despite these limitations, employers have noted the productivity of leavers. Meyer (1999) found that a majority of employers express positive attitudes about workers who formerly received welfare and are compelled to continue hiring them in the future.

Job Satisfaction

Research on job satisfaction has been popular among educational and industrial psychologists, and a vast literature has
Job Satisfaction Among TANF Leavers

evolved (Locke, 1976). Measured in different ways and within various employment settings, job satisfaction has been consistently identified as an important predictor of work behavior. Most notably, employees who choose to quit (Ackerlof, Rose, & Yellen, 1988; Freeman, 1978; McEvoy, & Cascio, 1985) or be absent from work (Clegg, 1983; Drago, & Wooden, 1992) have low job satisfaction.

Many behavioral researchers have investigated the sources of job satisfaction. A problem common to such studies is that working people often report fairly high job satisfaction levels. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to obtain statistically significant results when treating job satisfaction as a dependent variable. Nevertheless, researchers have discovered job satisfaction determinants related to both personal and work-related variables.

Being female, married and having good health have all been associated with higher levels of job satisfaction (Clark, 1996; Clark, Oswald, & Warr, 1996; Idson, 1990; Meng, 1990). A positive relationship between age and job satisfaction is a common finding, although there has been debate as to whether it is linear (Janson, & Martin, 1982; Kalleberg, & Loscocco, 1983) or U-shaped (Clark, Oswald, & Warr 1996; Warr, 1992). Race seems less useful in predicting job satisfaction (Bartel, 1981; Idson, 1990), and distinctions in job satisfaction among workers with varying educational backgrounds are unclear. It has been demonstrated that education translates into high earnings and upward mobility, but its correlation with job satisfaction usually has been negative (Clark, 1996; Clark, Oswald, & Warr, 1996; Meng, 1990). A possible explanation is that people who receive advanced educations have higher job expectations, which if unfulfilled result in diminished satisfaction with work (Clark, & Oswald, 1996).

Job satisfaction is also produced by certain workplace conditions. For instance, having flexibility and control over one's work activity has been connected to higher job satisfaction levels (Idson, 1990). A direct relationship between wages and job satisfaction has not been found, however workers tend to measure their earnings and benefits in relation to their peers or the market's "going rate", and the correlation between perceived equity of a job's economic returns and job satisfaction
is strongly positive (Cappelli, & Sherer, 1988; Clark, & Oswald, 1996). Additionally, Brown and McIntosh (2003) noted that several studies link elevated job satisfaction levels to having a senior position, reception of job training, perceived opportunity for advancement and job tenure.

Other job attributes may diminish job satisfaction. Workers at large firms have reported relatively low job satisfaction (Clark, 1996; Clark, Oswald, & Warr, 1996). Correspondingly, Idson (1990) has observed that big corporations are more apt to enforce rigid work rules, a practice which detracts from employee satisfaction. Numerous studies have shown that union jobs produce less satisfaction (Borjas, 1979; Freeman, 1978; Meng, 1990; Schwochau, 1987). Some have argued that union workers choose to voice workplace discontent while nonunion workers just decide to quit jobs they don’t like (Freeman, 1980; Freeman, & Medoff, 1984). This exit-voice theory has been challenged by Gordon and Denisi (1995), who found no significant ties between union membership and job satisfaction, as well as by Bender and Sloan (1998), who concluded that dissatisfaction among union workers simply stems from antagonistic industrial relations between labor and management.

The need for further research

Extensive research has been done on welfare reform, but levels of post-TANF job satisfaction have not been well assessed. Likewise, job satisfaction determinants among the leaver population have not been identified. Typically, job satisfaction studies are focused broadly on national samples or narrowly targeted on selected professions. As a result, connections between job satisfaction and socio-economic status are not very clear (Ritter & Anker, 2002). This article addresses these gaps in the literature by examining job satisfaction levels and factors associated with job satisfaction among former welfare recipients in one state.

Methods

Sample and Interviewing

The sample was drawn from 8,804 adults who exited the
Illinois TANF program in December of 1998. Consistent with other federally funded leaver studies (National Research Council, 1999), eligible survey respondents were those whose welfare cases had remained closed for at least two months following their initial TANF exits. The resulting non-proportional, stratified sample consisted of 500 Cook County (Chicago area) leavers and 501 leavers from the rest of the state (downstate). The downstate portion of the sample was further proportionately stratified by selected urban and rural areas. To account for the intentional over-sampling, I used weighted data for this study.

Six to eight months after their TANF exits, interviews were obtained from 514 (51.3%) sample members. Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) administrative data allowed for comparisons between respondents and non-respondents: They were virtually the same in terms of gender, age, TANF history, and household composition. Hispanics were slightly underrepresented as were the highly uneducated, but most disparities between respondents and non-respondents were not significant. Some sample members were continuously unemployed and were excluded from the study as were three respondents who refused to report job satisfaction data. This left a subsample of 434 working leavers.

The survey consisted of questions drawn from an earlier IDHS instrument as well as from similar TANF studies conducted in Michigan, Wisconsin and South Carolina. Once constructed, the instrument was pre-tested with a random sample of leavers having characteristics similar to those of the study respondents. The study was administered by trained survey research staff using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

Variables

Working leavers were asked the following question: “How satisfied or dissatisfied (are/were) you with your current or most recent job?” A five-point scale measured job satisfaction levels (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) and produced the study’s dependent variable.

I followed a framework used by Clark (1996) in which the
dependent variables thought to predict job satisfaction are classified as either personal characteristics (race/ethnicity, family size and structure, education, personal health, etc.) or work-related characteristics (wages, job tenure, hours worked per week, etc.). In addition, I used a third classification composed of welfare-related variables (time on welfare and reason for exit). I grouped the variables in this manner so that the findings could be reported efficiently, and to observe whether one set of variables or another was more important in terms of predicting job satisfaction.

Analysis

First, I obtained frequency distributions of job satisfaction and of the categorized respondent characteristics treated as independent variables in subsequent analyses. This permitted assessment of overall job satisfaction in the sample and yielded a demographic profile of early, working TANF leavers in Illinois.

I next considered group differences in mean job satisfaction by applying independent samples T-tests (on dichotomous variables) and analyses of variance techniques (on variables having more than two categories). With cross tabulation procedures, I measured the association of job satisfaction with each of the individual, welfare and work characteristics. Given the manner in which they are categorized, job satisfaction and most of the characteristic variables could reasonably be treated as ordinal. Moreover, dichotomous measures can be appropriately treated as ordinal when using contingency methods (Agresti, & Finley, 1997). The corresponding test statistic for ordinal by ordinal cross classification is gamma, which is parallel to chi-square, but preferable in this case because it is insensitive to small expected cell frequencies. In relation to job type, residential location, race/ethnicity and living arrangements, all of which cannot be considered ordinal variables, job satisfaction was treated as nominal in order to accommodate nominal by nominal cross classifications.

After testing for mean differences and assessing the strength of the association between job satisfaction and the selected characteristic variables, further analysis was conducted with a multivariate application. The ordered dependent
variable complicated the selection of a regression technique. Since there were only five job satisfaction categories and because responses were concentrated in two categories, an ordinary least squares (OLS) routine was not advisable (Agresti, 2002; Menard, 2001). Instead, I constructed a polytomous logistic regression model to estimate the effects of the independent variables on the log odds of having higher rather than lower job satisfaction scores. The Wald statistic generated for each independent variable in the model has a chi-square distribution with one degree of freedom and was used to determine if an effect was statistically significant. The model itself performed fairly well, as indicated by the highly significant model chi-square and the Nagelkerke pseudo R-square (.209).

Results

The distribution of job satisfaction in the sample is reflected in Table 1. Almost 80% of respondents report being very or somewhat satisfied with their job, while just over 15% report job dissatisfaction at some level.

Table 1: Reported job satisfaction distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Somewhat dissatisfied</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Neutral</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Very satisfied</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>434</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 presents frequency distributions of the categorized respondent characteristics treated as independent variables in later analyses. Respondents typically are African American, single mothers, caring for one or two children. Three fourths of the sample attained at least a high school degree or its equivalent. Before exiting the rolls mainly due to enhanced income or caseworker diversion, 43% received welfare for a period longer than five years. It appears that work following welfare usually did not pay well, was not full-time, offered
Table 2: Frequency distribution of individual and employment characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Characteristics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Job Characteristics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Hourly Wages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>≤ $5.15</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>$5.16 to $9.99</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>≥ $10.00</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/living w/partner</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>≤ 20</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>21 to 30</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31 to 40</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Children in Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>job Tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>≤ 6 months</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6 months to a year</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>415</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>&gt; 1</td>
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<td>163</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical environment</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>&gt; 1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Note. Respondents were allowed to report more than one reason for TANF exit and more than one work value. Categories associated with these characteristics are not mutually exclusive. For a few characteristics, there were small amounts of missing data. Where category Ns do not sum to 434 (Health Condition and Job Tenure), percentages likewise do not sum to 100.</td>
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**TANF Tenure**

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<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>2 to 5 years</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
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<td>43</td>
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**Reason for TANF Exit**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>%</th>
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<td>Time limits</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>Work requirements</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhanced income</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversion</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
few benefits and was unstable. Sample members most often worked in the service industry, earned median wages of just over $7 an hour and held their current or most recent job for less than six months. Only 22% benefited from employer sponsored health plans, and a smaller number (15%) received on-the-job training. When asked what they like best about their jobs, 38% of the sample reported social aspects, a fourth appreciated the type or difficulty of work and a fifth valued economic returns.

For each characteristic, job satisfaction means are reported as are the percentages somewhat or very satisfied with their jobs (Table 3). Most significant relationships appearing in Table 3 carry over to the polytomous logistic regression of job satisfaction, the results of which are presented in Table 4. Based on the information contained in these tables, I now consider the job satisfaction findings specific to each of the three characteristic types.

Job Satisfaction and Individual Characteristics

A significant positive relationship exists between job satisfaction and self-reported health. As can be seen in Table 3, of those believing themselves to be in very good health, 84% say they are somewhat or very satisfied on the job, with a mean satisfaction score of 4.21. A much lower percentage of respondents in poor or very poor health (60% and 67% respectively) report higher levels of job satisfaction, and their job satisfaction means (3.30 and 3.64 respectively) are the lowest among the subgroups. Controlling for the other characteristics in the model, the regression analysis provides further evidence of a link between health and job satisfaction. Health effects in Table 4 are statistically significant, and their signs as expected are negative. As such, perceived poor health significantly decreases the probability of reporting higher levels of job satisfaction.

For the most part, the influence of other personal characteristics on job satisfaction is minimal. There are gender differences regarding job satisfaction, yet due to the small number of men in the leaver sample these are not statistically significant. Family size and composition does not appear to impact job satisfaction. There is little variation in job satisfaction among those having more or less education. Caucasians report slightly
Table 3: Mean job satisfaction and bivariate associations of job satisfaction with individual and employment characteristics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Mean Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>% Somewhat or Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Job Characteristics</th>
<th>Mean Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>% Somewhat or Very Satisfied</th>
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<td></td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>Hourly Wages</td>
<td>3.28**</td>
<td>63.5**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$\leq$ $5.15$</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>$5.16$ to $9.99$</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>4.01</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>$&gt; 10.00$</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>83.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married/living w/partner</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>$\leq 20$</td>
<td>3.87**</td>
<td>77.3**</td>
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<td>Single, never married</td>
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<td>77.9</td>
<td>21 to 30</td>
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<td>80.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>82.2</td>
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<td>4 or more</td>
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<td>84.0***</td>
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</table>

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

Note: For work values and reason for TANF exit, a series of separate analyses were conducted for each of the response categories as they are not mutually exclusive.
lower job satisfaction levels than did Blacks and Latinos, but meaningful distinctions in job satisfaction in terms of race and ethnicity cannot be made. Likewise, there is little evidence to imply regional differences in job satisfaction.

**Job Satisfaction and Welfare Characteristics**

The Table 3 and Table 4 data point to a positive relationship between time spent on welfare and job satisfaction. Mean job satisfaction is lowest (3.86) for those who had been on welfare for less than two years prior to exit, while the mean satisfaction score for individuals who received welfare longer than five years is 4.15. Furthermore, the Table 3 cross tabulations indicate a statistically significant difference of almost 15 percentage points between short- and long-term welfare recipients. When other variables are held constant in the regression, the same picture emerges. Here, the significant positive coefficient on TANF tenure suggests greater job satisfaction the longer a person has been on welfare.

Connections between self-reported reasons for leaving welfare and post-TANF job satisfaction are less clear. At the bivariate level, there is only statistical evidence that being diverted off of welfare by a caseworker leads to subsequent job satisfaction. However, this relationship disappears in the regression analysis. Time limits and work requirements, the two most distinctive features of welfare reform, do not significantly affect post-TANF job satisfaction.

**Job Satisfaction and Employment Characteristics**

Taken together, the bivariate results and the regression analysis provide strong support for the hypothesis that more pay is associated with greater job satisfaction. Workers with earnings at or below the 1999 federal and state minimum wage ($5.15) have the lowest mean satisfaction score (3.28) displayed in Table 3. Likewise, just 63.5% of the lowest income group report being somewhat or very satisfied with their jobs, as compared to well over 80% for the higher earnings groups. Income from work also turns out to be a very strong, positive job satisfaction predictor in the Table 4 regression results.
Table 4: Ordered Logistic Regression of Job Satisfaction on individual and employment characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Characteristics</th>
<th>B (SE B)</th>
<th>Job Characteristics</th>
<th>B (SE B)</th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>(Other)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married/living w/partner</td>
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<td>-001 (.004)</td>
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<td>Clerical</td>
<td>.377 (.314)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Type/difficulty of work</td>
<td>.487 (.253)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience of schedule</td>
<td>.449 (.270)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>.605 (.374)</td>
<td>* p &lt; .05, ** p &lt; .01, *** p &lt; .001.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical environment</td>
<td>.051 (.314)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.456 (.358)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leaver job satisfaction also is related to the number of hours worked. In Table 3, leavers working less than 20 hours per week have a mean satisfaction score of 3.87, and about 77% of them report higher levels of job satisfaction. For those
working more regularly but not full time, mean job satisfaction (3.62) and the percentage reporting a higher job satisfaction level (67.6%) is lower. Job satisfaction appears highest among the workers whose schedules approach, meet or exceed full-time status. These findings imply a U-shaped relationship, and therefore, squared hours worked per week was included in a preliminary regression analysis as an independent variable. However, the corresponding coefficient was not significant and its direction provided no further evidence of a nonlinear relationship.

The leavers in this study are employed in various types of jobs, and a few distinctions in job satisfaction can be made. Job satisfaction is most pronounced among the small segment of the sample whose work is classified as professional/technical. Mean job satisfaction (4.80) and the percentage somewhat or very satisfied (91.6) are higher for these workers in comparison to leavers employed in all other fields. The largest group of leavers found jobs in the service industry, and mean job satisfaction (3.83) is considerably lower for this group, of which a quarter reported dissatisfaction with work. With service sector work as the reference category in the regression, the coefficients for the higher status jobs are positive and significant.

In comparison to leavers who are uninsured, on Medicaid or who have purchased private health coverage independently, job satisfaction is significantly higher when employers contribute to health care expenses. Table 3 shows that mean job satisfaction is 4.24 among leavers insured through employer-sponsored health plans and 3.95 for leavers not receiving this work-related benefit. This relationship is significant at the bivariate level, but not in the regression analysis.

While on the surface the data in Table 3 and Table 4 suggest several more relationships between job satisfaction and work characteristics, statistical evidence to support the following claims is weak. First, leavers with just a single employer are marginally more satisfied than those holding multiple jobs. Also, job satisfaction is a little higher among sample members who had received job training. Recent employment as well as stable jobs held for a year or longer both produce comparable amounts of job satisfaction. Finally, leavers who travel 30 minutes to an hour to work have higher job satisfaction than
do leavers with shorter and longer commutes.

Discussion

The terms of employment for many welfare recipients are forced in relation to work requirements connected to TANF. Moreover, work available to leavers is often found in the service industry and tends to pay substandard wages with few, if any, tangible fringe benefits. Consequently, when the context of jobs taken by TANF leavers is considered, the reports of high job satisfaction in this study are striking.

Several factors might explain the unbalanced distribution of job satisfaction in the sample. For instance, Marxist theory holds that individuals are inspired to work by the intrinsic aspects of any job and take pleasure in accomplishing job tasks that might otherwise be regarded as mundane (Marx, 1990). It also is important to remember that 15% of the sample was continuously unemployed and not a part of the study. There may be a self-selection bias when working leavers are examined exclusively. In addition, an uncommonly strong economy coincided with TANF implementation. We know this played a significant role in the caseload decline (Blank, 2001), and as well it may have influenced leaver work perceptions. The debate as to whether PRWORA was helpful or harmful still rages, but at the onset of welfare reform everyone, including those receiving cash assistance, was in agreement—getting welfare was dehumanizing and change was needed (Elwood, 1988). Job satisfaction among leavers may be high simply because past experiences in welfare offices have been so bad.

Discovering high job satisfaction levels in the sample is especially interesting given the widespread notion that the poor lack interest in working. A popular belief that fueled the original debate on the need to reform the American welfare system was that dependency on the government erodes positive attitudes about work. A key finding in this study suggests this assertion lacks empirical credibility: Leavers with the longest TANF tenures are more likely to report higher job satisfaction levels. Similarly, the job satisfaction among leavers documented in this article is inconsistent with some stereotypes
regarding the hierarchical classification of American jobs and the people who hold them. It seems that low-prestige jobs are not necessarily limited in terms of providing personal fulfillment. To some this finding might be used to challenge the practice of making policy based on unfounded claims about the work attitudes of the poor. Welfare reform proponents might favor a different interpretation. Since welfare recipients have been shown to enjoy work, even when it is found at the bottom of the labor market, some might be inclined to advocate tougher work requirements and more abbreviated time limits on benefit reception. Proponents of such policy changes should be cautioned that high job satisfaction does not remedy the inadequate material rewards produced by work after welfare.

Unlike research on different employee populations, I find very few connections between the personal characteristics of TANF leavers and job satisfaction. An important exception is health status, as those suffering from poor or very poor health are significantly less likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction. In addition, some evidence suggests that lack of private health care undermines job satisfaction among TANF leavers. Taken together, these findings underscore a fundamental issue confronting American society—the need to extend quality and affordable health care to all citizens.

Overall, since factors such as race, education and family composition do not appear to be determining factors, it is more fruitful to consider job satisfaction in relation to the structural nature of leaver employment for purposes of identifying social welfare policy issues. Of course, one would expect high pay, benefit reception and favorable working conditions to translate into elevated job satisfaction levels. This study confirms such presumptions. There is limited evidence to suggest that employer-sponsored health plans boost job satisfaction, but, more notably, the finding that better pay is related to greater job satisfaction deserves attention. Scholars and policymakers, noting the inability of work alone to protect TANF leavers against poverty, have endorsed the idea of raising the national minimum wage in the process of reauthorizing welfare reform legislation. Increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) at both the federal and state levels would clearly benefit low-income workers in this respect as well. In addition, this study
suggests that these policy decisions could improve the subjective feelings held by TANF leavers about their jobs.

Largely because so many people left the rolls in the wake of PRWORA, welfare reform has been perceived as a great success. Hence, now that it has come time to reauthorize the legislation, welfare reform advocates contend that the core components of the original law should be broadened in scope. Specifically, some lawmakers want to elevate the hours of work activity required by individuals for benefit reception and raise the expectations of the states to engage people in such activities. The clear objective is to force poor people into consistent attachment to the mainstream job market, but the underlying assumption is that they don't like working any more than they are required. The results presented above suggest otherwise, as working full-time or at least 30 hours per week had a significant positive impact on leaver job satisfaction. While reauthorization debate is likely to center around making TANF recipients work more hours whether they like it or not, policy choices would be more appropriately directed at promoting the availability of full-time employment opportunities.

Expanded demand for labor in the service sector has coincided with the movement of people off of welfare and into jobs, but employment conditions at the bottom of the labor market are such that work and poverty are still not mutually exclusive. Under these circumstances, welfare-to-work programs represent an uneven contract between the federal government and the poor. Following the 1996 welfare reforms, many recipients exited the rolls and entered the workforce, but low wages and employment instability have limited their rewards. Even so, this study shows that leavers are satisfied with the jobs they have taken. The determinants of the job satisfaction observed in the leaver sample indicate that policy approaches to enhance the material rewards of low-income work may also enhance the subjective rewards of working.

Limitations and Research Implications

The survey data used for this study were collected from individuals a short period after they had exited the welfare system. While this has been a common approach for
evaluating welfare reform, longitudinal studies are necessary to document the long-term policy impacts. It is especially important to pay attention to job satisfaction over time as it tends to change in relation to age, job tenure and professional development (Locke, 1976).

A common theoretical framework underlies many job satisfaction studies, as personal characteristics and aspects of the work environment are thought to affect job satisfaction. Less attention has been given to the role of politics, culture and community (Seashore & Taber, 1975). This article makes a contribution by considering a few variables related to welfare reform, an issue that is clearly political and cultural. Finding that time on welfare translates into higher job satisfaction is notable and worth discussion, but one might pose other questions about welfare reform and job satisfaction. For instance, does reception of certain in-kind benefits or access to other social programs have a bearing upon job satisfaction? The social policy setting in Illinois is relatively progressive. Besides Food Stamps and the requisite transitional Medicaid, Illinois boasts a well developed child care subsidy system, broad state health insurance programs, improved public transportation and a state-level earned income tax credit. Intended to ease the burdens of the working poor, these social supports probably promote job satisfaction at some level.

Because the leavers' personal characteristics did not seem to affect their job satisfaction, I focused on influential structural variables of employment, such as wages, benefits, and working conditions. While job training was examined as a potential job satisfaction predictor, I did not fully investigate the significance of advancement opportunities more generally. This omission is important given that job ladders have become shorter due to the choices employers often make in response to economic globalization and deregulation (Appelbaum, Bernhardt, & Murnane, 2003).

Because job satisfaction is subjectively determined, some scholars have questioned its meaning (Hodson, 1991). Although used with great frequency by job satisfaction scholars and relied upon in this study, one-dimensional job satisfaction measures are especially vulnerable to such criticism. Some researchers, consequently, have disaggregated job satisfaction
through factor analysis into several components, such as pay, work intensity, social conditions, long-term prospects and other facets (Schwochau, 1987). Building on the findings presented and discussed in this article, research exploring multidimensional job satisfaction among leavers would improve our understanding about the nature of post-TANF employment.

References


Job Satisfaction Among TANF Leavers


Searching for Social Capital in U.S. Microenterprise Development Programs

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This paper focuses on the claims and efforts of U.S. microenterprise development programs (MDPs) to build social capital among poor and low income entrepreneurs. MDPs offer business training and lending services to individuals operating very small businesses (with five or fewer employees and less than $20,000 in start-up capital). Advocates suggest that MDPs help promote economic development by building social capital defined as networks among small entrepreneurs and between entrepreneurs and their larger community. We begin our paper with a short review of the varied definitions and claims about the role of social capital in promoting civic and economic empowerment. Then, drawing on interviews with practitioners from 50 programs, we examine the nature and extent of social capital building in U.S. MDPs. We consider the degree to which our sample MDPs directly promoted networks among clients, and between clients and individuals/organizations outside the program. More than half of the programs tried to network clients with each other, but only a few programs focused on building networks between clients and the larger community. From a critical perspective, we discuss more expanded notions of social capital building in poor communities and the barriers to their implementation.

Keywords: social capital, microenterprise development, poverty alleviation, poverty, networks

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This paper examines the relationship between microenterprise development and social capital. Social capital refers to networks that bond people to each other, and connect them with their community. Although some scholars (Bourdieu, 1986) argue that it reproduces social inequality, others have tried to examine the ways in which policies that build social capital can reduce poverty and inequality (Putnam, 1993). At its best, social capital promotes the well being of individuals and their families, and bolsters communities and society by increasing participation in civic affairs. Involvement in the civic sphere is thought to bolster democracy. Social capital is increasingly an important aspect of social policy, for example, internationally it is viewed as a strategy for the alleviation of poverty.

The connection between microenterprise development programs and social capital is embedded within the discourse and strategies of poverty alleviation. Microenterprise development programs (MDPs) offer business training and lending services to individuals operating very small businesses with five or fewer employees and less than $20,000 of start-up capital. In terms of economic development, microenterprise is seen by many as one mechanism whereby disadvantaged individuals might survive and even thrive in the global economy. Microenterprise development is tied to notions of economic self-sufficiency for individuals, especially poor and low income individuals, and, some claim that it is also tied to social capital formation that ultimately contributes to the larger community (Anthony, 1996).

In this paper, we will consider the prevalence, nature and context of social capital building efforts in U.S. MDPs. Some analysts have argued that, in contrast to pioneering southern hemisphere MDPs, U.S. programs are more narrowly focused on individual empowerment and self-sufficiency and less interested in building client and community networks. We draw on data from interviews with practitioners from a sample of 50 U.S. MDPs.

Social Capital and Microenterprise Development

Despite the explosive popularity of social capital during
the 1990s, this concept is grounded in social thought that dates back to 19th century analyses of social inequality and social cohesion found in the scholarship of Durkheim, Marx and Weber (Foley & Edwards, 1999). However, the more recent work of Pierre Bourdieu (1986), James Coleman (1988), and Robert Putnam (1993; 2000) has inspired the prolific line of investigations focused specifically on social capital as a cause, outcome, and process of economic well being and democracy.

Bourdieu’s analysis (1986) is often described as the first fully developed theory of social capital (Rankin, 2002; Somers, 2005). He was interested in how non-monetary capital contributed to the reproduction of social and economic inequalities (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Social capital provided Bourdieu with a link between standard forms of economic capital (monetary) and his concept of cultural capital which included factors such as prestige and power that also generate value. Social capital allowed him to capture the real economic value produced by nonmarket social connections and relations.

In contrast to Bourdieu’s view of social capital as a part of individual and group identity, James Coleman’s (1988) rational choice perspective lends itself to an analysis of social capital as a conscious strategy for promoting economic development or as an explanation for a lack of development among various social groups or settings. Coleman argues that social capital exists to varying degrees in social relations of all sorts, but exists only insofar as these relations provide resources for some action in which the individual might want to be engaged.

Perhaps the most widely discussed perspective is that of Robert Putnam (1993; 2000) who defines social capital as those features of social life that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. Associations, especially when they include horizontal relations among individuals, facilitate civic engagement (Foley & Edwards, 1999, p.144). Putnam applied these ideas in Making Democracy Work (1993) wherein he argues that social capital differences explained why some regions of Italy were more economically successful than others. In his popular book, Bowling Alone (2000), Putnam describes the decline in civil commitment and participation and the resulting social malaise in the United States.

Two substantive themes within the literature focus on
1) social capital and civic virtue, and 2) social capital and economic development. First are discussions about the role of social capital in building civic participation and democracy. Putnam (2000) and others suggest that involvement in networks and associations promotes civic engagement and responsibility that foster a more democratic society. The second theme examines the role of social capital in the economic development of individuals and communities. Putnam (1993) and others (e.g., Woolcock, 1998) suggest that involvement in social networks can promote the economic well being of individuals and their communities. These networks should be both bonding, that is linking individuals within a community, and bridging, that is connecting individuals and groups across different communities with differing levels of resources (Woolcock, 1998; Putnam, 2000).

Some analysts criticize the social capital literature on both civic virtue and economic development for ignoring the vital links between these two spheres. Foley and Edwards (1999) argue that social capital requires both access to networks and resources; Rankin (2002) argues that without critical analysis and consciousness raising of the ways in which social capital can promote oppression and exclusion, economic development programs will not be effective in reducing social inequalities. Other critics (Young, 1994; McLean, Schultz, & Steger, 2002; Rankin, 2002) argue that mere participation in associations by individuals will be insufficient for promoting positive civic engagement and viable economic development, and moreover that such participation if left unchallenged might simply promote inequality and exclusion.

Social capital is increasingly at the center of economic development policy. It is a major component of the World Bank's efforts to mitigate global poverty through economic development programs like MDPs. The popularity of U.S. programs was stimulated by success stories from pioneering MDPs such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, ACCION in Latin America, and the FINCA Village Banking Model, and several microenterprise demonstration projects in the United States (Jurik, 2005). There are over 400 such U.S. programs and they are expanding at a rapid rate (Sherraden, Sanders & Sherraden, 2004).
Microenterprise development advocates tend to emphasize the second theme in the literature—the economic development implications of social capital (Shreiner & Morduch, 2002, Woolcock, 1998). They argue that MDPs foster “bottom up” economic development that begins with individuals and their links within the local community and spreads outward. A prime mechanism by which MDPs attempt to build social capital is through the peer lending method pioneered by the Grameen and other southern hemisphere programs. In peer lending, loans are made to groups, not individuals. Typically, four to ten individuals join small groups called borrowers circles; they make lending decisions, offer peer support, and pressure for repayment. The group is responsible for the repayment of each member’s loans. Advocates argue that training, loans and borrowers circles help individuals become economically self-sufficient while also connecting them to the larger community, and thus building social capital (Larance, 1998; Ashe, 2000).

Much research on the effects of involvement in MDPs has concentrated on how programs empower individual clients. Generally, the term empowerment is defined as a move from a state of powerlessness to one of being in control or possessing power (Young, 1994). Individual empowerment includes not only improved economic self-sufficiency but also increased self-esteem and educational pursuits. For women, it can mean increased reproductive control and power in their families (Bhatt, 1995; Blumberg, 2001). Researchers add that individual empowerment can produce the social capital needed to enhance civic engagement because individuals who participate in MDPs get more involved in community and civic affairs. Communities with active MDPs enjoy improved economic conditions and civic participation (Auwal & Singhal, 1992).

In the wake of rising rates of unemployment and poverty and demands for welfare reform, MDPs have become popular in the United States as a strategy for reducing poverty without recourse to government welfare programs (Schreiner & Morduch, 2002). Like southern hemisphere programs, they offer training and lending for individuals who want to operate microenterprises. However, evidence suggests that relative to famous southern nation MDPs, U.S. programs are more individualized in their approach: they focus more on empowering
clients as individuals by fostering self-employment to promote economic self-sufficiency, and focus less on building social capital for civic participation in the community. Compared to Bangladeshi programs, U.S. MDPs are less focused on addressing the systemic nature of poverty (Coyle, Houghton, Evans & Vindasius, 1994, pp. 4-5).

We wondered if the image of U.S. programs as individualized was empirically accurate. We were interested in the degree to which social capital building was important in U.S. MDPs. We asked how much network building was valued as an activity in these programs, what was the focus of networking activities where they existed, and among whom were networks fostered. In the latter case, we were interested in networking efforts that involved clients, not just staff. We wanted to know if efforts were directed primarily toward linking clients within the program—which we refer to as *intra-program networking*, or if they went *beyond* the program to link clients with individuals and organizations from the larger community, what we refer to as *extra-program networking*. In the case of extra-program networks, we wanted to know with whom clients were to be linked and the focus of these relationships: were they business-centered, social service-centered, and did they incorporate components to foster civic engagement and community empowerment? Our analysis is focused on the reported objectives and efforts of U.S. MDP programs rather than on the outcomes and effectiveness of social capital building activities.

Methods

Our data are drawn from a national sample of U.S. programs. We conducted interviews with practitioners in 50 U.S. MDPs and obtained information on their programs and service delivery patterns. The interview sample was selected through a combination of random and purposive sampling techniques.

We drew our sample from the Aspen Institute's national directory of U.S. programs supplemented by a list of participants at a national conference of MDP providers. Because peer-lending programs comprised a small minority of U.S. MDPs, we selected all the peer programs listed in both sources.
and drew a systematic random sample of non-peer lending programs. We mailed surveys to the resulting list of programs, and followed-up with requests for telephone interviews. The final sample of 50 represents a 57 percent response rate of eligible programs.

The interviews ranged from 40 minutes to an hour and a half in length. Topics included a description of program goals, history, services, and changes over time. The interviews contained several dimensions that were related to social capital building. The role of and experience with peer lending groups (if any) and other networking activities were addressed. We asked practitioners if their program had adopted explicit networking goals, and what activities were most central to meeting such goals. We asked about the orientation of program training including topics covered (e.g., whether in addition to business training, they included consciousness-raising activities that fostered an awareness of the societal as well as the interpersonal context of individual problems).

Forty-five of the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed; detailed notes were taken on the five that were not taped. The preliminary written questionnaire for staff asked about program size, budget, main objectives, client characteristics, and outcome data on lending and numbers served. We obtained additional information from official program literature and web sites and program responses to an annual survey conducted by the Association for Enterprise Opportunity (e.g., Langer, Orwick & Kays, 1999). We use these data to address the questions described above. To conform with institutional research ethics requirements, we refrain from referring to actual practitioner or program names, but do note the program case identification number in parentheses at the end of quotations.

Findings

Practitioners were enthusiastic about the success and growth of their programs. They credited southern hemisphere MDPs as important points of reference, but emphasized the need to tailor their programs for the United States. Practitioners attributed the need for modification to the individualism so characteristic of the culture and to the complexity of doing
business in the United States. Most practitioners said that U.S. programs needed to offer more training than was needed in southern nation programs.

Despite many commonalities, there was considerable variation across MDPs. The programs in this sample most often assisted businesses of low income individuals, especially women and minorities, although some programs also assisted moderate and higher income individuals. Some programs targeted disabled individuals, immigrants and refugees, and displaced or underemployed workers. Most practitioners described client businesses as new, small-scale sales and personal service concerns that were highly labor intensive. They included childcare, baking, furniture assembly, word processing, and computer or office equipment repair businesses. Loans were as small as $300, although some MDPs assisted larger and more established businesses with loans as large as $35,000. The hope was that these larger businesses would provide jobs for disadvantaged individuals.

Eight programs were actually part of government (state, city or tribal authority). The majority of the sample, 42 programs, were operated by non-governmental groups; these included 12 non-profit community development corporations, eight programs that were affiliates of larger MDPs (e.g., the Grameen), and three regional umbrella MDP organizations. However, to describe the majority of MDPs as "non-governmental" is misleading since most programs in our sample received money from federal, state, local, or tribal governments. In fact, several were established as a result of federal welfare-to-work projects and U.S. Small Business Administration initiatives. Thus, in the area of microenterprise development, as in so many other public service areas, the line between government and non-governmental organizations is blurred (Jurik, 2005).

Researchers and practitioners categorize MDPs based upon several criteria. Programs differ in the degree to which they emphasize lending and training activities. Some offer extensive training whereas others concentrate on lending. Some programs reflect the economic development tradition that was popularized in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. These programs aim to make bigger loans to businesses that would employ large numbers of individuals in low income
areas. A significant number of them have added micro-lending components. Despite their addition of MDP components, economic development-oriented programs tend to focus more on lending than on training, and to base their lending decisions on the potential of the business to produce jobs for a designated geographical target area. Consistent with Servon (1999), we refer to such programs as place-based; they comprised one-third of our sample.

A second group, and the most highly publicized type of MDP, was comprised of programs that utilize the peer lending model. This group also comprised one-third of our sample. However, since we were specifically interested in studying client networking in MDPs and the peer model usually is cited as an exemplar of social capital building, we over-sampled peer programs. Peer programs actually comprise a small percentage of all U.S. MDPs; less than 16 percent of U.S. microenterprise lending programs utilize the peer lending model (Sherraden et al., 2004).

Hybrids comprise a third type of program: like MDPs in the place-based tradition, they offered only individual loans, but like U.S. welfare and job programs, they also offered more training and social supports to accompany microenterprise training and lending. Hybrid programs tended to be newer than the place and peer programs.

Consistent with the literature (Coyle et al., 1994; Ehlers & Main, 1998), we hypothesized that U.S. MDPs in general, especially those offering only individual lending, would primarily focus on client self-sufficiency through self-employment training and lending activities. We expected programs with peer lending components to be those most active in social capital building because, by definition, peer lending entails building networks among clients, and peer lending programs have been those MDPs most often associated with social capital development in the media and the literature (Jurik, 2005). We examined the degree to which MDPs' networking agendas extended to connecting clients with individuals or groups outside the program, and what program components (if any) were designed to establish such links. Did programs directly attempt to foster civic engagement and community empowerment, or did they assume that it might be a by-product of economic
empowerment through self-employment? We were curious to know if individual lending programs engaged in social capital building activities or if such agendas were limited to programs with peer lending components.

We divide our discussion of findings into three parts. First, we discuss the importance of individualized goals such as self-sufficiency and personal empowerment in U.S. programs. Second, we examine the number and types of programs that incorporated social capital building goals such as intra-program networking (i.e., bonding social capital) as primary components. Third, we consider MDPs that incorporated components for building extra-program networks (i.e., bridging social capital), and the orientation of such networks toward business, social service, or broader civic/community engagement (social consciousness raising and civic involvement components).

**Individual Empowerment Goals**

The practitioners we interviewed emphasized individual empowerment through self-sufficiency as a major if not the major goal for their programs. Practitioners in 48 MDPs believed their program empowered clients as individuals by providing them with training and financing for self-employment. Some practitioners believed that self-employment alone increased client self-esteem and promoted a sense of empowerment. A number of programs minimized training and technical assistance services, believing that it was important to keep program costs low and avoid replicating welfare models that purportedly promote dependency. One practitioner said that the reason for the high costs of some MDPs was "the high [level of] technical assistance that they're involved in" (#18). Another said: "[W]e're not trying to develop a pattern of dependency, we're trying to facilitate and provide a tool which helps people get on their feet" (#21).

Although almost all of the practitioners in our sample stressed individual empowerment, only 19 programs focused exclusively on individualized services to clients. Another 5 engaged in occasional efforts to network clients either within or outside of the program, and 26 engaged in some form of systematic networking in one or more of the categories
Searching for Social Capital

described below. We define systematic networking activities as those that occur with some degree of regularity and that practitioners said were a fundamental component of the program structure. Sporadic or non-systematic networking, in contrast, includes activities that are undertaken on an irregular and perhaps one-shot basis and are not viewed as an integral program component.

*Intra-Program Networking*

We considered the prevalence and nature of intra-program networking in our sample of U.S. MDPs, that is, efforts to bond clients with each other as well as with staff for mutual assistance and support. Significantly, 21 programs engaged in systematic forms of client networking. Intra-program networks figured prominently in these MDPs. A practitioner described the role of client networking as follows: “The participants of the program run their own loan group and they also have chair meetings where they basically decide what will be happening in the program. They plan networking events and they also brainstorm with each other to do problem-solving” (#44). Fifteen of these MDPs offered peer lending components. This supports our expectation that peer lending programs would be more likely to be involved in client networking activities. All but one peer program in our sample focused on client networking as a major component. However, practitioners noted that developing peer lending groups was no easy matter. Several programs had dropped peer lending components. One described U.S. culture as too individualized for peer lending to work. Several other programs, modeled after MDP pioneers, experienced problems with peer lending. They suggested that many clients did not want to take the time to be involved in borrower’s circles or other networking activities. In some areas, distance and transportation were problems. Child care, illness and other problems associated with low income lives diminished networking efforts. Some practitioners had modified their peer groups so as to decrease group autonomy and reduce the penalty on the entire group when a member defaulted on a loan.

Although intra-group networking was most common in peer lending MDPs, some non-peer programs were involved
in developing this bonding form of social capital. Six non-peer lending programs were involved in systematic efforts to network clients; two of these were place and four were hybrid programs. For example, in one place-based program, although loans were made to individuals, clients still met in peer groups for training and to provide feedback on each other’s business ideas (#20).

Extra-Program Networking

We examined the extent to which program networking moved outward to include what Putnam has referred to as bridging social capital that connects one community with another. In the case of microenterprise development among marginalized populations, it is viewed as important to connect MDP clients with communities of individuals who possess varying or greater amounts of resources (e.g., greater business know-how or contacts) (Woolcock, 1998). While over 90 percent of the MDPs made efforts to connect their program with other community organizations and businesses, most networking was focused on linking staff rather than clients with these outside organizations. We were interested in such efforts only if ultimately used to directly connect clients with individuals and groups outside the MDP. We referred to these sorts of activities as extra-program networks.

Generally, we found that MDPs were most active in extra-program networking that was closely linked to their main program purpose – enhancing self-employment opportunities for clients. When it came to attempts to directly foster bridging social capital less directly tied to client businesses, U.S. MDPs were far less involved.

Extra-Program Networking Focused on Business

Business contacts were the major form of extra-program networks that were directly fostered by the MDPs. Sixteen programs engaged in systematic efforts to network clients with extra-program business contacts. These activities included holding regular networking sessions between clients and outside business contacts, actively maintaining referral lists of business consultants for clients, and assigning business mentors from the community to clients. As expected, peer
programs were the most active type of MDP in business networking. Nine peer MDPs were regularly involved in extra-program business networking.

Other peer programs were involved in extra-program business networking but on a non-systematic basis. Some programs were located in isolated rural areas which made such business networking activities more difficult. Still other peer practitioners left such networking to the initiative of borrower circles while staff focused their energies on developing and training the circles.

Although peer programs had the greatest presence in extra-program business networking, hybrid programs were active in this realm as well. Six hybrids (n=6) were involved in business networking outside their programs. For example, one hybrid MDP fostered business networking through its alumni association, which met regularly to network past with present clients and to bring in business people from the larger community. Many place-based programs tried to introduce clients to bank lending staff, and occasionally brought in guest speakers or experts from the community. However, these activities were much more non-systematic and sporadic than were the efforts of programs that prioritized business networking.

**Extra-Program Networking For Social Services**

When it came to broader forms of networking such as linking clients to social service organizations outside their programs, U.S. MDPs were less active. Ten programs offered extended social services to their most economically and socially disadvantaged clients. These went beyond the basics of business training and networking to include social services such as transportation and childcare assistance, immigration counseling, housing referrals, and workshops on topics such as nutrition, self-esteem, fear of success, and other personal issues. However, only six programs aimed to systematically develop ongoing links between clients and social service providers in the community. Three hybrid and three peer MDPs tried to develop social capital related to social service provision. Although many MDPs maintained lists and referred clients to other organizations and individuals in the community for assistance, far fewer programs worked to monitor and
evaluate the effectiveness of their referral networks on a systematic basis.

**Extra-Program Networking for Community and Civic Involvement**

Finally, we examined the links between MDPs and efforts to increase civic participation. Social capital networks that foster civic participation are expected to promote both collective empowerment and social change (Breton, 1994; Young, 1994).

Accordingly, we considered how many MDPs included, as a part of their program agenda, activities intended to bridge clients to ongoing political and community affairs. We began by considering the number of programs that incorporated some critical analysis of the barriers confronting client businesses that were the outgrowths of racism, gender inequality, and class disadvantage. Six programs (three peer and three hybrid) tried to address the structural sources of barriers to client businesses in training and peer groups. However, only two of the programs (both peer) tried to link their clients into community and political empowerment activities. Still, each of these programs offers an interesting example of how MDPs might encourage civic involvement and community awareness. In one program, practitioners took a dozen clients to attend a conference on sustainable development issues outside their state. They later helped some clients attend an international conference on women and development issues. The practitioner argued that by providing clients with these opportunities, “They’ve really taken off and gotten involved. Now the women are doing it on their own” (#5).

In the second MDP, practitioners facilitated connections between the program and several community groups fighting what one called, “the more vicious parts of welfare reform.” The program also encouraged clients to bring issues affecting microenterprises to public awareness by inviting a series of local politicians to visit borrowers’ circles.

Three additional programs occasionally linked clients to the larger community or sought to deal with broader community issues in their peer and alumni groups. One program conducted training on ethnic conflict resolution to impart skills to clients that staff hoped would “spill over” into the larger community (#35). Another practitioner said that the peer lending
groups in her program often get involved in the community, but clients and not staff make such decisions. This program exemplifies the view that MDPs should not directly promote extra-program networking, but that instead programs should foster the development of client enterprise groups and then let those groups chart their own course of action with regard to civic and community empowerment.

Conclusion

Consistent with images of U.S. MDPs as more oriented toward individual empowerment and economic self-sufficiency, we find that about half of the programs in our sample eschewed networking in lieu of individualized lending and training services. As expected, peer lending MDPs were the most involved in client networking both inside and outside programs. Most extra-program networking focused on linking clients with business contacts in the community. Few MDPs aimed to systematically link clients with social service contacts, but several programs provided extended social services themselves. Rarest were programs that directly encouraged networking around civic and community issues. Only two programs were systematically involved in social capital building efforts that aimed to directly promote such links. Earlier comparisons of U.S. and southern hemisphere MDPs suggest that U.S. programs tend to focus more narrowly on self-employment training and lending as a type of "technology" to promote self-sufficiency (Coyle et al., 1994, pp. 4-5). Our findings support this characterization of U.S. MDPs.

Given our findings, the obvious question is why U.S. programs are not more involved in social capital building. To answer this question, we address the societal context of MDP social capital building efforts. First, we consider the context in which MDPs and non-profit programs more generally operate. In today’s neoliberal climate, non-profits are under pressure to emulate the cost effectiveness associated with market sector firms (Jurik, 2004). Practitioners said that peer lending and other networking efforts were costly in terms of money and staff time. There was pressure to utilize staff for activities directly connected to client businesses such as business training
Extra-program networking was limited by social and historical context in other ways as well. MDPs emerged in the United States as a part of the shift away from welfare, and were informed by many of the assumptions that were attendant to that shift, e.g., that welfare created dependency. In this context, staff often were reluctant to facilitate activities that were even reminiscent of welfare programs, i.e., that were, in the words of one practitioner, "social workey."

These staff/client rationales point to a bitter irony in MDPs: strategies that were developed, at least in part, to facilitate social capital building among disadvantaged populations are weakened by the situation that generated the need for them. MDPs are one potential avenue for the transition of the poor from welfare, but any activities that are seen as like welfare, even if they are essential for this population, even if they might make business success more likely, are tainted and are to be avoided. This is the most pessimistic aspect of our study: the very connections that Putnam and others describe as necessary for the bridging-type of social capital, connections which MDPs were supposed to facilitate, are causalities of the individualism that is increasingly at the heart of U.S. ideology and of microenterprise development.

Notwithstanding this pessimistic conclusion, there are some hopeful implications in our study. Even some of the non-peer MDPs facilitate networking activities. Some programs supply essential social services or network clients with community organizations that will supply them, services that increase the likelihood of business success. A few practitioners described strategies that were elegant examples of social capital formation, both bonding and bridging types. Client networks were established, but clients also were connected to the larger community in terms of business contacts, social services, and, importantly, in terms of participation within that community. Recall, for example, that one MDP sponsored clients to attend an international conference and, upon their return, to become publicly active in matters that were related to their businesses but that also transcended them. Such programs seemed to understand the full potential that MDPs have for their clients as individuals entrepreneurs, but also for their clients as
citizens of a larger, viable community. Additionally, some MDPs have reoriented their focus toward more direct efforts to stimulate social capital by building networks between clients and a broad range of individuals and community organizations beyond the program (Friedman, 2001, p.4).

In closing, we offer a few recommendations with respect to the potential for microenterprise development as a method for building social capital. First, like the programs in our sample, MDPs must focus primarily on preparing clients to become entrepreneurs. This is the major purpose of the programs, the ones that do it best survive, and if their clients are to make it in business they need training and loans. Moreover, given the target population of low income and poor individuals from often disadvantaged communities, it is unrealistic to expect MDPs to be a quick fix that creates the social capital needed for economic well being and progressive civic engagement.

At the same time, however, it is equally unrealistic to expect that training and loans alone will make this population economically self-sufficient, or that a few client networks will somehow create such social capital. A better approach would address the immediate needs of the clients—training and loans—and also include as a part of their training, components that deal with the larger social context, that make them conscious of it, and that gradually facilitate civic participation. One practitioner told us that client involvement in the larger community was essential not only for them to operate businesses that would be successful in the long run, but also to be more effective human beings. Another practitioner said that clients need to be "bilingual," that is to understand the language and culture of business, and of their own communities. Such a "bilingual" approach will make economic survival more likely and, at the same time, address those issues of social capital that will not only help ensure individual economic survival but also lead to more vibrant and effective communities and societies.
Table 1. Type of Networking by Type of MDP—Peer, Place or Hybrid Programs

*Parentheses indicates number of programs involved in that type of networking but not with a systematic focus.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Networking</th>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Systematic Networking</th>
<th>Non-Systematic Networking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intra-Program Networking</td>
<td>Peer:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hybrid:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-Program Networking: Business-Focused</td>
<td>Peer:</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hybrid:</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-Program Networking: Social Services-Focused</td>
<td>Peer:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hybrid:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-Program Networking: Community/Political Action-Focused</td>
<td>Peer:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hybrid:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Perhaps the clearest mark of American Exceptionalism is our failure to have enacted a program of universal health care; we remain the only advanced industrial nation not to have done so. Why no national health in the United States? is a question worthy of the same consideration as Werner Sombart’s famous and much pondered query, Why no socialism? The curiousness is amplified when we note that throughout the twentieth century, the American public has consistently voiced support for some form of universal, national health care.

While Jill Quadagno’s *One Nation Uninsured* offers a nuanced kind of explanation, it is ultimately a story of the power of interest group influence in an pluralist political system, albeit one in which business and professional organizations do occupy a privileged place: “stakeholder mobilization [has been] the primary obstacle to national health insurance” she argues (p. 11). What distinguishes this from accounts that merely lay the blame at the feet of the American Medical Association, however, is that Quadagno takes pains to demonstrate that the AMA alone had little power – only when physicians were able to act as part of a larger coalition of interests were they able to effectively shape or stop reform. (And if they could effectively portray reform efforts as a socialistic plot, all the better). So instead of a single protagonist, there are many here, a shifting cast of characters that includes trade unions (which throughout the early century especially sought private benefits for their employees and distanced themselves from or opposed a national program), business interests (sometimes united in opposition, at other times divided into larger corporations seeking to shed medical costs and small businesses fearful of new mandates), insurers, hospitals, and an array of politicians dependent upon one group or another for their electoral successes.
How then can we explain the enactment of national health care for the old and the very poor? Medicare and Medicaid finally succeeded, Quadagno argues, because, with over two-thirds of the public already insured privately, the consequences of public insurance for the old and poor were seen as minimal, and thus mobilized opposition was correspondingly weak. But Quadagno also notes the weakened public image of the AMA, in part the result of some episodes of overreach; the enormous electoral victory of Johnson and the Congressional Democrats in 1964; the mobilization of the AFL-CIO in favor of Medicare; and Ways and Means Committee Chairman Wilbur Mills’ strategic commitment to getting a plan enacted.

The problem is that Quadagno’s account does not help separate out the relative import of these and other factors – the AMA may have not fought as vigorously, perhaps, and lost the American Hospital Association, the insurance industry, and Blue Cross as allies this time around, but the political landscape might have made their task unusually difficult even absent these circumstances. It is in this way that One Nation, Uninsured may be better as history than as social science, for there is something of a forest for the trees problem here: much of the book is taken up with a legislative history (and it is good history and close analysis), but there is too little by way of theory or larger argument to help fully make sense of these developments or to put them in a context. It can thus seem as if healthcare policy in America is just the product of one damned thing after another.

That said, this is a work with much to recommend it. Much of Quadagno’s account is a useful contribution to the growing policy history literature. Crucial to the tale told here, for example, is FDR’s decision to strip universal health care from the SSA out of fear that it would weaken chances of enacting the bill. Once private employer- and union-based programs stepped into the breach, the opportunity for and demand for public solutions was lessened, further privileging privately-run (if often publicly-subsidized) solutions. And the manner in which Quadagno demonstrates the immediate medical cost inflation that Medicare caused and how that, in turn, weakened support for universal coverage in favor of cost-containment, offers a fine lesson in unanticipated consequences. Further,
Chapter Three, "Provider Sovereignty and Civil Rights," is especially worthy of attention: once again, as in her book *The Color of Welfare*, Quadagno may be at her best when tracking the effects of race, here powerfully demonstrating how Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, when leveraged with the economic incentives and enforcement power of Medicare, helped finally to desegregate hospitals in the south. And finally, while there is little attention here to Clinton’s failure to enact universal health care, in the context of Quadagno’s rich history, it is not a unique event but just another step in a long line of failed twentieth century attempts at reform.

Stephen Pimpare
Yeshiva University


In the aftermath of last year's hurricane disasters, the nation's attention is once again focused on many of its poor citizens living in substandard housing. Debates are raging on both sides of the political aisle as to the best solution for rebuilding and re-housing those in the most extreme poverty. Of course, argument about housing bring forth a contentious dialogue regarding race, poverty, class, "culture of poverty" and other current and historical views of poverty and social welfare programs in American society. Likewise, in recent years there has been a movement away from the large congregate high-rise model of public housing (sometimes referred to as "projects") to more scattered-site or dispersed models of public housing. However, there is much debate as to whether dispersed housing provides enough units for former congregate housing tenants. It is clear that the notion of public housing in its congregate form is considered outdated, dangerous, and unseemly. Many of these notorious high-rises (such as Chicago's Cabrini Green) have been razed and replaced with smaller projects or scattered site public housing.

Given this philosophical movement in public housing policy, as well as the current debate over poverty in the
devastated regions of the Gulf Coast, the timing is perfect for J.S. Fuerst’s book *When Public Housing was Paradise: Building Community in Chicago*. Fuerst is quick to remind the reader that conditions in the large high-rise projects were not always grim. In fact, from the 1940’s to the 1960’s, these were well run, skillfully managed dwellings for impoverished but upwardly mobile tenants in Chicago. His book stresses that it is not the building structure that determines the success or failure of public housing, but rather, the quality of management and the careful screening of tenants.

Fuerst tells the story of successful public housing in Chicago via the first-person voices of those involved in these glory years of housing policy. He excerpts interviews from hundreds of former tenants who went on to live successful and accomplished lives, as well as key staff and leaders of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) from that period. Other chapters use interviews to reflect on themes such as race, segregation, integration, education, peer support, and sense of community among residents of Chicago public housing.

It is clear that Fuerst attributes much of the success of public housing in its first 20 years to Elizabeth Wood, the first executive director of the CHA. He describes her as passionate, crusading, caring, and yet strict. She understood what Fuerst feels most housing authorities today do not: That public housing is not housing of last resort. Residents must be carefully screened and held to high standards to ensure continued access to quality housing for the working poor.

It is against this historical background that Fuerst points public housing policy forward to the future. He argues convincingly that we must again return to these strategies, rather than treating public housing as a right. For example, inability to evict problematic tenants is a major cause for the downfall of many housing projects, and that this endangers the rest of the housing community. Like Elizabeth Wood, Fuerst is a strong advocate for those who can make the most of the public housing opportunity to better their lives; he also remains compassionate and insists that social services be made available for CHA tenants as well as for those tenants evicted.

The voices of CHA staff and current and former residents of Chicago public housing eloquently echo Fuerst’s arguments.
They paint a picture of housing units where residents were held to firm rules, but also took great pride in their units and their complexes, planting flower gardens, tending one another’s children, and feeling a true sense of a community bound together by the dream of a better life in America. For most of these tenants, their life in public housing was vastly superior to their dwellings prior to being approved by the CHA.

This is a compelling look at the lives of working-class Chicago residents, many of whom went on to great success, which they attribute in large part to the environment of public housing in the 1940s-60s. The book is quite moving by virtue of its use of interviews with residents. For a reader raised with the media image of big-city congregate public housing as a hotbed of drugs, gangs, and violence, these portrayals of an idyllic era are quite enlightening.

Fuerst offers an excellent and highly analytical look at the reasons for the failures and successes of Chicago public housing over the last half century; he points out current projects in other cities that still abide by careful tenant screening, skilled management, and community development activities that characterized the CHA in the past. This book strongly makes the point that poverty is an economic condition, not a statement of character or ability. We must remember this when our current public housing policy seems to be more focused on integrating the poor into other socioeconomic classes (another way of saying that we must separate them from one another due to a dysfunctional “culture”) and abandoning any notion of staff and resident responsibility and accountability for their homes and their lives.

John Q. Hodges
University of Missouri-Columbia


Bowles, Gintis and Osborne have recruited a strong array of economic scholars to compile an impressive book focused
on family background and the part it plays, or does not play, in
economic success. In addition, the book includes a heavy dose
of philosophy about social justice and what part the family
plays in creating, sustaining, or advancing economic advan-
tage, to the loss and gain of other families.

The reader is informed that the book results from a number
of papers presented at a workshop held at the Santa Fe Institute.
At a minimum, the workshop must have been a stimulating
academic event. The chapters in the book that emanate from
those revised papers are not only thought provoking, they
are thought perplexing. Is the book a tough read, particularly
for non-economists? It most certainly is. Is the book a worthy
read, for economists and non-economists, alike? It most cer-
tainly is.

The book is structured in a fairly traditional manner. The
three editors, Bowles, Gintis, and Groves expertly execute the
introduction. Nine chapters follow and each has a solid focus
on intergenerational transmission of economic success. While
a majority of the chapters, and material in the book, seem to
have a domestic U.S. focus there are two chapters that specifi-
cally speak to the book's central theme, but place the discus-
sion in China and Sweden. The chapters of the book form a
coherent whole and together provide the reader with mean-
ingful dialogue about the book's overall theme. It is, however,
up to the reader to maintain an awareness of this theme, since
the individual chapters sometimes become minutely focused
on a particular variable, like the transmission of personality
traits. Individual chapters often relate to the previous chapter
and provide the reader with an easy extension of thought. A
good example is the first two chapters which are appropriately
titled, "The Apple Does Not Fall Far from the Tree," and "The
Apple Falls Even Closer to the Tree than We Thought."

The book has a number of strengths, not the least of which
is that it is a very scholarly production. Claims made in the
separate chapters are presented with clarity and are well sub-
stantiated. When results of analyses are provided, they are ac-
 companied with information about the source of data on which
the analysis is based, the format of the analysis, and both the
strengths and shortcomings of the data. Hertz's chapter, titled
Rags, Riches, and Race: The Intergenerational Economic Mobility
of Black and White Families in the United States, and Groves’ chapter on Personality and the Intergenerational Transmission of Economic Status exemplify this strength. Consistent with the highest achievement of scholarly academic dialogue, the authors do not force the reader into a conclusion. They put forward thoughtful questions and conclude by letting the reader enjoy the perplexity of the questions and the pursuant discussion. No author does this better than Swift in the final chapter in the book, titled Justice, Luck, and the Family: The Intergenerational Transmission of Economic Advantage From a Normative Perspective. Swift asks the reader to consider the question of what is legitimate and what is morally required of parents who are concerned both for the creation of advantage for their children within a family structure and what is legitimate and morally required of parents who aspire to uphold a Rawlsian sense of social justice. It is perplexing for the reader to consider if a balance can be struck? The author even asks the reader to deliberate about whether social policy to limit or expand a family’s opportunities for advantage intrudes into the sacred sphere of “family life.”

The book has few weaknesses. However, readers need to be prepared, particularly non-economists, to slog on through some dense material. Not every reader will appreciate the book’s reliance on the secondary analysis of large data sets, the use of multi-variate analysis, and economic modeling. Nevertheless, the overall theme of the book is highly appealing to a broad audience of social scientists and students in the behavioral and social sciences, but the book’s technical knowledge requirements may limit its appeal. However, the book stimulates thought and discussion. As stated by the editors in the book’s introduction, the volume is “optimistic concerning the power of social policy to enhance equality of opportunity.” If asked, it appears the authors of the chapters could add the caveat “yes, but only with good data, extensive analysis, and the inclusion of a process of dialogue, academic dialogue preferred.”

Larry Nackerud
University of Georgia

Most social welfare histories characterize poorhouses, almshouses, workhouses and poor farms as punitive nineteenth-century institutions. Following the 1834 English Poor Law Reforms, English and American authorities provided relief to poor people in institutions, “indoor relief,” in preference to relieving the poor in their own homes, “outdoor relief.” Indoor relief, reformers believed, would discourage all but the truly destitute from seeking public relief and thus discourage pauperization, or as we would say, chronic dependency. After the turn of the twentieth century, the vogue of indoor relief waned. The English abandoned the Poor Laws and Progressives in the United States endorsed a more humane outdoor relief policy, according to most accounts.

David Wagner challenges this common understanding in *The Poorhouse: America's Forgotten Institution*. Based on newspaper accounts, poorhouse records, oral history interviews, and local government records, Wagner provides a rich description of life in six New England poorhouses between the 1830s and the 1940s. After an introductory chapter which clarifies terms and places the poorhouse into the context of the historiography of U.S. social welfare history, Wagner provides a series of “scenes from the poorhouse” designed to put “people into poorhouse history” in Chapter 2. Then, in a series of short chapters, Wagner discusses the motives of the founders of the poorhouses, the development of an inmate culture, the politics of poorhouse management, poorhouses in the twentieth century, and poorhouse staff members. In a final chapter, Wagner speculates about a “return of the poorhouse” in recent decades, focusing on the growth of homeless shelters, prisons, and nursing homes.

Rather than grim *Bastilles*, as the English working class referred to nineteenth-century workhouses, Wagner finds that poorhouses were humane institutions that adapted to their residents even as residents themselves shaped aspects of institutional life and exerted influence on poorhouse managers. Good poorhouse management, especially the need for poor
farms to raise crops, sometimes contradicted the goals of rehabilitation and independence inherent in poorhouse philosophy. Wagner shows that poorhouses survived much longer than has been commonly understood, as late as the 1960s for several of the institutions described in this volume.

The six poorhouses singled out for intensive examination include large and small institutions, located in rural areas and small and mid-size cities in Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. In the case of each institution, Wagner discovered and exploited rich documentary evidence, including town and county records, institutional records, letters, and newspaper accounts. He also conducted oral history interviews with the children of a poorhouse superintendent. This book is in many ways a model of what can be accomplished in local social welfare history.

There are a few lapses in this otherwise admirable book. Wagner sometimes relies on secondary sources for primary quotations. A passage on p. 1, cited as an excerpt from the "English Poor Laws on the workhouse," is actually from the 1834 Report of the English Poor Law Commissioners. Wagner quoted it from Piven and Cloward's *Regulating the Poor* (1971), who in turn quoted it from de Schweinitz's *England's Road to Social Security* (1943). Both of these sources attributed the quote correctly. On p. 155, note 20, a quotation attributed to Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, as quoted in Frank Bruno's *Trends in Social Work* (1957), is actually not Sanborn's words but Bruno's. Sanborn's paper, cited by Bruno several pages before the quoted words appear and apparently not consulted by Wagner, is an 1884 survey of the management of New England almshouses. Finally, Wagner's statement that the term "the Whig interpretation of history" was "initially coined" by Asa Briggs in 1961 will surprise readers of Sir Herbert Butterfield's *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931).

Wagner might have paid more attention to images of the poorhouse in popular culture in his discussion. For example, Will Carleton's nineteenth-century poem "Over the Hill to the Poor House" inspired several popular songs and a 1920 motion picture. Wagner's conclusions about the human dimension of the poorhouse will be familiar to readers of John Updike's first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair* (1959). Like many US
social welfare historians, Wagner focuses on the Northeast. He does not discuss poorhouses in very large cities, such as Boston, where much of the Progressive Era reform movement was most active. One wonders how and to what extent the poorhouse experience in large cities and in other regions—the Midwest, the South, and the West—differed from what Wagner describes. Hopefully, Wagner's success in this effort will result in the completion of studies on poorhouses in large urban areas and in other parts of the nation.

Paul H. Stuart
The University of Alabama


Kirk sets out to provide a "counterpoint to conventional wisdom" (p. 17) about mental health practice in general and mental disorders in particular. To do so, he has gathered an impressive cadre of mostly male colleagues and invited them to author chapters which would "selectively raise critical questions" (p.17) on the topic. He introduces the reader to the text by summarizing what will be the arguments of many, but not all, of the 30 authors whose comments will follow his: namely, that social work's ties to psychiatry are intensely problematic, that we have been co-opted and thus are blind to market forces that shape mental health practice, and, along that line, we lack a sufficiently critical perspective on mental health practice today. The book is a good read, infuriating at times with its own ignorance of a critical perspective, but also at times educational, useful, entertaining and thought-provoking. I may very well adopt it in my mental health courses.

However, perhaps predictably with such a text, neither the tone nor the content of the chapters is consistent. Yes, the book includes Wakefield's confrontation of the social worker's role in using the deeply flawed DSM and in "treating mental disorders," as well as Epstein's articulate and destructive words about our ignorance of the "plausibility of ineffectiveness and pernicious harm" (p.323), and Gambrill's angry, albeit
well-organized, indictment of, well, just about everything not related to evidence-based practice (her version of it, that is). Gomory reprises his scathing, some might say, mean-spirited, attack on the published ACT intervention research, even stooping to implicate blame for the ACT program’s failure to prevent suicide in some clients. His important call to examine coercion in this, and presumably all, mental health intervention is almost lost. Saleeby also opens his chapter with strong words, specifically referring to the “medical-psychiatric/pharmaceutical/insurance cartel” (p. 23), but ends with an important plea to shift our ideas about professional authority and put hope at the center of practice. He encourages us not to be blind to the truly radical nature of the strengths perspective. Likewise, Corcoran and colleagues open with “managed care is a mess” (p. 430) but offer a candid and useful update on where managed care has been and is today. As I have suggested elsewhere, Cohen mixes solid criticisms of psychiatric medication that need to be heard, with seemingly dismissal of the positive real life experiences of thousands of consumers of medication. I am surprised that someone who is known for his banishment of clinical research in psychopharmacology relies heavily on one recent study of placebo effects to make his case. Such a quirky incongruence seemed evident in the Moses and Kirk chapter. While reminding us of absolutely vital things like publication bias in research about medication and the need to pay attention to the meaning of medication, it uses phrases like “resistant” and “refuse,” words long abandoned by client-centered practice advocates in favor of words like “reluctant” or “decline.”

When the book is good, it brings a fresh and scholarly perspective to contemporary issues in mental health. Bola and Pitts provide both a helpful summary of the field’s rejection of schizophrenia as one thing, and a well-written reminder on how to avoid “biological thinking” errors. They may be the only authors that directly and empathetically speak of the suffering of people with mental disorders, even in the face of their rejection of schizophrenia as a “valid hypothetical construct” (p. 33). Mattaini’s unique and engaging chapter looks at the advantages and disadvantages of assessment strategies through the lens of social justice. Offering up one of the book’s few new
ideas, he suggests movement toward target/goal taxonomies rather than the disorder/problem centered systems. However, to me, the most important chapter in the book is La Pan and Platt’s indictment of the profession with respect to the eugenics movement last century. In meticulous fashion, the authors demonstrate how our professional arrogance and past notions of the “best interest” of others led us to be powerful instruments of social control over women, people in poverty, and people with mental and physical disabilities. This reminder that our all-too-frequent self-congratulatory accolades about the social justice aspects of our mission can be misguided in the light of historical analysis. Thyer, too, reminds us that social workers don’t always “get it right.” He uses excerpts from social work authors to argue that behavioral theory and practice has been misunderstood, indeed seriously distorted, by the profession.

I should mention that in a book filled with provocation—some much-needed, some worn-out—several chapters are brief and straightforward: Dickson’s summary of laws about involuntary medication with inmates, Segal’s piece on self-help groups, Reamer’s rather generic chapter on ethical practice, Reid and Colvin’s (amazingly non-defensive) discussion of evidence-based practice and transportability, and Rosenfeld and Pottick’s brief but terrific discussion of gender, power and “self-salience” in mental health. The implications of men externalizing problems while women internalize them is not new, but this chapter by Rosenfeld and Pottick is somehow fresh and approachable. Rose recounts his wonderful, almost inspiring, argument for values-based practice centered in empowerment, action and dialogue. Howard and colleagues, in perhaps the most genuinely helpful chapter in the book, offer a review of “guideline development as a growth industry” (p. 271). Like others, Hsieh and Kirk warn against mindless application of the DSM by practitioners, but also seem to recognize that social worker’s training may position them best to avoid that. Who would have thought it, but Nugent presents a look at probability theory’s relevance to assessment and diagnosis, coming to the same negative conclusion that others in the book do; Nugent’s specific words connect diagnostic inference to roulette and black jack. If you can avoid getting lost in the technicality and get past the tendency to reify mental
disorder (the chapter is built around whether one "has a mental disorder"), the chapter appeals to the fanatic in logic.

The call for a more critical perspective on mental disorders and mental health practice within social work has been appropriately loud and persistent for many years. The book continues that effort and often succeeds, as I have detailed above. It fails when criticisms of existing research read like methodological murder, with the ignorance of the continuum of research rigor and the fact that confidence in an intervention's effectiveness is related to an analysis of plausible threats to internal and external validity as well as to logic and replication over time. It fails when a few underemphasize social work's biopsychosocial lens and overstate its allegiance to a biological reductionism, now itself on the way out. It fails when a few convey an "us-them" mentality, when straw person arguments are set up, and when evidence of true change within the mental health and social work fields, are ignored. I look forward to the continuing conversation.

Kia J. Bentley
Virginia Commonwealth University


Mixed methods, the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques to answer research questions, has received greater discussions in academic and research circles. There is still a negotiation of how to be successful in using a mixed methods approach rather than using one methodology as an anchor and adding on the other methodology. Such a mixed approach can lead to better descriptions of pathways to successful child development. A pathway framework is organized around understanding everyday life for children and families within an ecological context—the individual subsystem in the context of the family system, the family subsystem within
the cultural system of values, beliefs and motives, and the
community system that both affects and is affected by various
subsystems. This volume brings the pathway framework and
mixed methods approach together, providing examples from
various scholars' research and evaluations of programs.

In the edited volume, studies designed to provide impli-
cations for creating services, policies and programs that will
increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for children and
families are presented. The book is divided into five sections.
Section I focuses on classrooms, schools and neighborhoods.
Section II examines ethnicity and ethnic development in child-
hood. Section III explores culture and development. Section
IV examines mixed methods studies to better elucidate the
effect of social programs on children. Section V looks at family
intervention studies.

While each of the chapters in and of themselves are in-
teresting, the commentaries in section II were thoughtful cri-
tiques and analysis of the chapters in that section. For example,
William Cross, in his commentary of the studies presented by
Deborah Johnson and Ruben Rumbaut, contrasts and scruti-
nizes their work in a manner that is fair, balanced but criti-
cal. Such a critical commentary in each section would have
strengthened the book.

There are interesting and stimulating chapters found
throughout the book. Until I read the first chapter in the section
on culture by Tom Frickle, I didn't realize how much of my
own international research and field work relied on mixed-
methods survey-ethnographies. At the same time, the chapter
was a general introduction to the issue and not specific to the
issues of child development; the example used, while inter-
esting, had little relevance to the topic. The commentary by
Thomas Brock offers a concise guideline on the characteristics
of successful mixed-methods projects; while not really a cri-
tique of chapters in this section, it was an insightful summary
of issues in mixed-methods research.

The only caveat I have about the book was that I expect-
ed a full discussion of both the quantitative and qualitative
data. Instead, the book emphasizes the qualitative compo-
nent of mixed methods projects in most chapters. Two excep-
tions stood out. One was the chapter by Jeffrey King, Jeffrey
Liebman and Lawrence Katz that presents a nice integration of mixed methodologies in their study of fear in the "ghetto." The other was the chapter by Catherine Cooper, Jane Brown, Margarita Azmitia and Gabriela Chavira on Latino immigrant families.

I think the best way to make a summary about the book would be to see if I would have purchased it had it not been given to me to review. Since I lost the first complimentary book while traveling in Europe and used the library copy to conduct this review, I decided it was a book I would like on my shelf as a reference and purchased a copy. Any person interested in childhood studies and mixed methodologies could benefit from the book, the wisdom it has to offer, and the critical analysis that are found throughout. It offers promise as a tool to stimulate cross-discipline discourse and research on the many policy, program, practice and research issues that affect the paths in navigating childhood successfully.

Victor Groza
Case Western Reserve University
Book Notes


Social work is a practice profession. Nevertheless, most social workers will eventually be called on to evaluate some area of practice or agency performance, comment on the merit of existing policies, or participate in the planning of services. *The Practice of Research in Social Work* was written as a textbook for a graduate level social work students introducing the issues, concepts and methodologies of applied social work research. The co-authors bring expertise from social work and sociology, fields that share an interest in the "science" of the social sciences, along with attention to real-world problems and solutions.

The text provides a comprehensive overview of social sciences research with numerous examples from social work, including some from the authors' own research into mental illness and homelessness. The thirteen concise chapters are thoughtfully structured to support classroom teaching for a one or two semester course. Along with the main text, each chapter also includes a list of key terms, a highlight summary of the chapter, discussion questions, practice exercises, web exercises and three or four chapter-related assignments for writing a research proposal, typically required of students in research methods courses. A full glossary of terms is conveniently integrated into the index. Appendices include very helpful material on interpreting scientific articles and finding information.

A main strength of the book is the clarity with which the authors present complex topics. For example, statistical fundamentals (such as the normal distribution and probability) are presented within the context of sampling theory early on in the text, which lays the groundwork for the later chapter on quantitative data analysis, which discusses issues of central
tendency, dispersion, and statistical inference. The authors’ presentation of experimental and quasi-experimental group designs is straightforward, departing from other texts in that the material is preceded by a thorough discussion of causality and research design rather than limiting the presentation of this material in the context of threats to internal validity, which is more typical in other texts. Another interesting difference from other textbooks is the inclusion of a section on ethical concerns in every chapter rather than devoting a separate chapter to the topic. This strategy relates ethical issues to every stage of research activity so that the ethical issues are given better conceptual foundation.

Culturally competent or sensitive research, while addressed in some areas throughout, could have been given more attention in the areas of sampling theory, measurement error, interpretation of data, and the role of social sciences research in society. While there are chapters on qualitative methods and data analysis, some introductory material about mixed methods would better represent the reality of most human services research, particularly in program evaluation. Occasionally some advanced topics, such as ordinary least squares regression, are introduced without enough preparatory information. Despite these few issues, the book is a concise introduction to research and a very good addition to the literature.

Edward Cohen, University of California, Berkeley


Discussion about universal health coverage has been in the prominent in the consciousness of many Americans in the last few years. With a poor economy, the rise in low-wage work, and decrease in manufacturing jobs, the proportion of Americans without health insurance is increasing. *Uninsured in America* provides an in-depth look at the men and women in America who do not have health insurance and provides
powerful insights into the problem.

In their account, the authors focus on what they term the "death spiral." The root of the death spiral lies in the fact that insurance coverage is so strongly linked to employment in the United States. Economic forces—such as layoffs due to offshoring, starting one's own business, and family leave to care for small children or elderly parents—begin the spiral. As health problems go untreated, the more severe the problems become, and the more costly it becomes to treat, often forcing people without insurance to choose between forgoing doctor visits and prescriptions, or selling their homes or other possessions, with the possibility of homelessness ever-present. As a result of health problems and visible indicators of poverty such as obesity and missing teeth, securing anything more than the most minimal status job becomes difficult, and health coverage is unattainable. Thus, the people described in their book found work difficult to obtain and to keep, not only because of a lack of available jobs, but also because of untreated physical or mental health issues, and they found it difficult to make ends meet.

Starr Sered and Fernandopulle interviewed a wide range of uninsured Americans with many levels of education, including graduate degrees. Many were employed at the time of their interviews and some had the opportunity to purchase insurance, but for amounts that would significantly reduce their take-home pay, making it unaffordable. Others could not work because of untreated or under-treated health care issues. Still others had been laid off after plant closings, but their chances of securing employment again if the economy improves are slim due to health conditions that have been exacerbated with lack of care. They also demonstrate that adhering to the work ethic guarantees neither health insurance nor steady work and income.

The final chapter of the book outlines suggestions that have been made for universal health coverage in America, but there is no easy solution. The authors argue that the current system for the poor is not economically sound. Without access to preventative care, problems worsen until there is no choice except to visit the emergency room or receive other exorbitantly priced treatment, which may be paid for by Medicaid.
or may never be paid. They contend that any feasible solution must sever the link between paid employment and insurance and must provide a minimal level of health care for all Americans, much as we provide a minimal level of education via the public schools. They argue that not only is this a humane way to treat citizens, but it is much more cost-effective than the current system.

Krista Drescher Burke, University of California, Berkeley


Since the invasion of Iraq by the government of the United States and its "coalition" allies, the number of books and articles on the topic of imperialism have proliferated, and there is general agreement in academic circles that recent events herald the resurgence of an overt and unabashed commitment on the part of the current American government to assert imperial authority over the nations of the world. However, many historians and political scientists would reject the idea that imperialism is a new feature of US foreign policy. Long before the invasion of Iraq, scholars such as Noam Chomsky and Chalmers Johnson had railed against successive American administrations that had both covertly and overtly engaged in political, subversive and military adventurism designed to undermine legitimate governments in other parts of the world.

Victoria de Grazia's book makes a significant contribution to the current academic discourse on imperialism by focusing not on its political and military dimensions, but on its cultural manifestations. For de Grazia, imperialism invariably involves cultural diffusion and the adoption of the cultural artifacts of the imperial power. She contends that long before the government of the United States achieved hegemonic influence, American consumer culture had infiltrated the orderly and hierarchical bourgeois society of early 20th century Europe.

The author examines her thesis of the "irresistible Americanization of Europe" with reference to a number
of innovations including the introduction of supermarkets and chain stores, the popularity of Hollywood films and celebrities among European audiences, the spread of service associations such as Rotary, the adoption of big brand marketing and the general inculcation of consumerism among the mass of the population. The author also makes use of the notion of culture-clash to suggest that American cultural diffusion faced two powerful countervailing cultural forces, namely fascism and communism, but that it ultimately defeated them. However, she concludes the book by questioning the belief that American culture will continue to exert diffusionary hegemony in what has become an increasingly complex, multicultural world.

This is a scholarly and provocative book which makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the contemporary role of culture and its diffusion. Although the author is an historian whose analysis is based primarily on an historical account of cultural change in Europe over the last 50 years, there is much in this book that sheds light on the way American consumerism is an integral part of the multi-dimensional globalization process. The book suggests that an analysis of globalization must transcend the narrow focus on economic liberalism that characterizes much scholarship in the field to include a fuller account of how cultural preferences are integral to the process of economic integration and how these, in turn, are integral to the political forces that are now widely characterized as imperialistic. In addition to its scholarly contributions, this is a readable and enjoyable book which contains a wealth of interesting information that will appeal to both academic and popular audiences.


Many European societies have become increasingly diverse over the last half-century, and the ethnic and cultural
relationships between their citizens have become increasingly intricate. Although opposition to cultural diversity is hardly new, it has become the object of intense political and media debate, and has also involved academic analyses that offer different policy prescriptions for creating more inclusive and solidaristic societies. However, the adoption of policies that recognize minority group rights within a flexible multicultural society have been challenged not only by traditionalists in the academic world, but by many ordinary people who believe that multicultural politics has disadvantaged them, and undermined their privileges.

These complex issues are examined by Roger Hewitt in his account of multicultural politics in Britain and other Western industrial societies. Hewitt focuses on the London borough of Greenwich where he conducted research into the attitudes of young white people towards multiculturalism. The research was undertaken in the wake of three racially motivated murders in which the police were accused of failing to act decisively to bring the perpetrators to justice. The most widely reported of these was the murder of Stephen Lawrence, which failed to secure a conviction, and resulted in allegations of institutional racism against the police and more generally against British society. Hewitt’s interviews show the extent to which many white people reject these allegations and the policies which were subsequently put into place to respond to racist violence. His sensitive account raises the question of how multicultural policies can address the fears and concerns, as well as the stereotypes and prejudices, of the white majority.

Although the book is based on qualitative research related to specific incidents of racist violence in London, Hewitt goes far beyond an idiographic account of particular events to offer a sophisticated theoretical analysis of a huge body of literature that addresses these questions. He shows that academic discourse on multiculturalism is sharply divided, and that the neoconservative position has, over the years, become ascendant to reinforce the white backlash. It has worked its way into the political domain to challenge integrationist strategies in education, housing and immigration policy. In addition, Hewitt’s account encompasses a wide geographic sweep that reports on developments in other European countries, Australia and
particularly the United States. He shows that the neoconservative influence has been most effective in the United States and, with impressive detail, he examines the struggle over multiculturalism in various spheres of American life. His analysis also ranges over other approaches that offer an alternative to the neoconservative orthodoxy. His ability to summarize these theoretical perspectives is not only impressive but helpful to anyone who is not familiar with this literature. The book makes a significant contribution to understanding the complexities of cultural diversity in the industrial nations today and should be widely consulted.


Blending ethnography and social commentary, War on the Family powerfully chronicles the lives of incarcerated women and their families, and the many injustices that beset them. Mandatory minimum sentencing laws for drug convictions have directly lead to dramatic growth in female incarceration rates, leading to the separation of women from their families. Their children are often placed in the care of relatives or the state. With policy changes that regulate kinship care and limit reunification timelines, it is incumbent upon child welfare workers and other social workers to gain a better understanding of this disproportionately affected population. The body of literature documenting the needs and strengths of incarcerated women and their children is small but growing, from studies on children’s development to the social and economic needs of women post-incarceration. Golden’s book makes a unique contribution by introducing the stories of individual mothers and families and drawing lessons from shared themes.

The issue of incarceration and maternal separation is explored from multiple angles. Golden provides background on the changes in social policies and criminal law that have become increasingly less supportive and more punitive towards minorities. The effects of these policies are evident in
the recounted experiences of mothers and their children. While the names change, the stories are resoundingly similar: the road to incarceration begins in a childhood and youth marked by abandonment, sexual abuse, and poverty. Intergenerational patterns of incarceration, substance abuse, and violence is part of the cause, but the real villain is a system of oppression and surveillance that sends a message to underprivileged children of color that they are expendable. The majority of the women Golden interviewed internalized the blame for their situations without recognizing the macro forces at play in their lives. These women’s tales of survival are a testament to their resilience and an appeal for a different world for their children.

*War on the Family* is an engaging read, informing the reader through a well-crafted balance of analysis and anecdote. While Golden’s narration can slip into dramatic phrasing and pontification at times, few readers will fail to be moved by her descriptions of mothers’ suffering, children’s anguish, or the redemptive power of love. Golden closes with on tone of hope, noting model programs which provide aid to current and former female inmates and their children as well as advocacy programs which seek to change the status quo. Doubtless, Golden’s book will win more advocates to her cause, the belief that “we do not need more programs to change these young people’s lives, but rather programs to change an oppressive social order.”

*Amy C. Conley, University of California, Berkeley*


In the field of child maltreatment, too often theory and practice exist in separate realms and are not considered together. It is therefore a pleasure to see David Howe’s new book. This excellent work is a much-needed, eminently-readable discussion of developmental attachment theory, its interplay with issues of child maltreatment, and related practice implications.
I would recommend this book to any person interested in developmental psychology theory and its application in child welfare practice.

Howe, a professor of social work at the University of East Anglia, UK, builds on his past work regarding emerging trends in attachment theory, child maltreatment, and family support. The present book is organized into five parts. Part one provides background on attachment theory and child development. The theory holds that "young minds" internalize relationships with caregivers to form a framework on which they regulate emotions, guide behavior, and negotiate social relationships. Children who experience sensitive and emotionally-available caregiving regard themselves as lovable, and form positive expectations of others. For abused children, the caregiver is a source of threat and pain rather than (or in addition to) comfort and protection. These children suffer all manner of emotional, cognitive and physical deficits. Parts two through four of the book consider basic types of maltreatment—abuse (physical and psychological), neglect, and abuse and neglect (including drugs, depression, domestic violence and sexual abuse)—and their adverse effects on development of a sense of self, others, and expectations for relationships. Each of these sections is punctuated by a compelling case study. Part five surveys the latest research findings regarding attachment-based supports and interventions—and discusses them in relation to parents and children of different developmental ages.

The book's organization is a strength that is also the source of a potential critique. That is, the separate sections lend the text a useful structure for study and future reference on a particular type of maltreatment and its sequelae. But as Howe himself observes, in practice, abuse types are complex, tend not to fall neatly into one category, and can change over time. By the same token, the survey of interventions is considered in the final section of the book. Some readers might wish for more integration of this information—perhaps as a separate sub-section—within each of the other parts of the book.

In sum, Howe's book is a notable achievement. The scholarly presentation and timely research reviewed make the book suitable for academics and graduate students. But those outside the university also stand to benefit from this important
work. While the text is not a "how to" manual on working with abusive parents and children at-risk for maltreatment, practitioners interested in the evidence base for treatments and supports for this population would be well-served by reading this book. For clients whose "developmental relationships" have been traumatic and damaging, Howe's discussion of intervention through "therapeutic relationships" that achieve a "safe but structured" therapist-client connection with empathy, compassion and responsiveness should resonate with many who work in the demanding field of children and family services.

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