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Housing Assistance and Disconnection from Welfare and Work: Assessing the Impacts of Public Housing and Tenant-based Rental Subsidies

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The well-being of families disconnected from welfare and work are of growing concern to policymakers. This article examines the relationship between economic disconnection and housing assistance, a critical source of support that subsidizes what is the largest fixed expense for most households. Results from multilevel logistic models show that the odds of being disconnected are higher for public housing residents and lower for single mothers receiving tenant-based rental assistance in comparison to those in private housing. Findings indicate that housing policies should be considered alongside welfare policy changes aimed at economically disconnected families, and that public housing is a critical site for interventions.

Key words: economically disconnected families, housing policy, public housing, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Recent changes in the structure of public assistance programs have benefited some groups, but left others without consistent support. The number of low-income mothers receiving neither employment earnings nor public cash assistance, a situation also known as being economically disconnected, is growing (Blank & Kovak, 2008; Loprest & Zedlewski, 2006).

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In addition to no or very low incomes, economically disconnected women are likely to experience barriers such as learning disabilities, physical limitations, and drug use (Turner, Danziger, & Seefeldt, 2006). Such barriers hinder women's abilities to find work as well as to negotiate the bureaucracies of receiving public assistance. Research on how disconnected women support themselves indicates that they receive cash and in-kind support from public, familial, and community sources, but much of the assistance is sporadic at best (Ovwigho, Kolupanovich, Hetling, & Born, 2011). Thus, government housing assistance, through both public housing residence and tenant-based housing assistance, is a potentially important support for these families.

Providing decent and affordable housing is a top priority for policymakers developing supports for poor families, and understanding the impact of housing programs on the outcomes of low-income families will lead to better-designed programs and policies. Housing status can serve as a critical platform to reach vulnerable low-income families, and these programs should be tailored to the type of housing assistance received, as the two types are very different. Public housing is defined as project-based housing owned and managed by a local housing authority. In contrast, tenant-based rental subsidies, commonly known as vouchers, provide portable assistance to households living in private rental housing. However, no research has systematically explored whether the type of housing assistance—public housing or tenant-based housing assistance—is relevant to disconnection or related to the likelihood of being disconnected from both work and public assistance. Research is also lacking on whether or not state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) rules that are related to housing assistance influence disconnection.

This article examines three related research questions in order to understand how federal housing assistance is related to disconnection among single mothers. First, what is the association between housing assistance type and disconnection without controlling for personal characteristics? Because policymakers can use housing as a site for intervention and are unable to control for demographic characteristics of individuals when designing their interventions, we examine the
relationship between each type of assistance and disconnection with housing type as the only independent variable. Second, how are public housing residence and receipt of tenant-based rental assistance each associated with being disconnected, controlling for other personal characteristics? We hypothesize that the different structures and neighborhood characteristics of the two programs may lead to different outcomes in terms of disconnection, even after controlling for demographic differences. For example, perhaps the lower housing burdens and higher poverty neighborhoods faced by public housing residents lead to a higher likelihood of being disconnected. And, third, do state welfare rules related to the treatment of housing assistance receipt affect the likelihood of being disconnected?

Background

Prevalence and Personal Circumstances of Disconnected Single Mothers

The issue of disconnection from work and welfare has attracted scholarly and policy interest. Disconnected single mothers make up a large and growing portion of families in poverty and former welfare recipients (Acs & Loprest, 2004; Blank & Kovak, 2008; Loprest & Nichols, 2011; Loprest & Zedlewski, 2006). Although studies use different time periods, data sources, and definitions, estimates indicate that approximately a fifth to a quarter of low-income single women are without work and welfare at a particular point. Disconnected single mothers face multiple circumstances that hinder their ability to find stable, formal employment (Turner et al., 2006). Studies of welfare leavers who are not employed and have not recidivated indicate that disconnected leavers are more likely to have health problems and limited work experience and lack a high school diploma (Acs & Loprest, 2004; Wood & Rangarajan, 2003). These barriers make negotiating the application process more difficult (Brodkin, 2006) and may lead to decisions to not apply for welfare regardless of eligibility and need. Economically disconnected parents involved with the Washington state child welfare system reported needing more help in accessing medical services and applying for financial benefits than other child welfare-involved parents (Marcenko, Hook, Romich, & Lee, 2012).
Research examining how disconnected families support themselves provides mixed results. A majority of disconnected women continue to receive food stamp and Medicaid benefits (Blank & Kovak, 2008; Turner et al., 2006), although recent work by Loprest and Nichols (2011) suggests that receipt rates are relatively low, perhaps as a result of stigma, preference, or barriers to access. Strict welfare rules influence the likelihood of disconnection (Hetling, 2011; Moore, Wood, & Rangarajan, 2012) and likely add to the low uptake of other public benefits. Studies of welfare leavers indicate that some have gone on to the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) rolls or have children who are receiving SSI benefits (Acs & Loprest, 2004; Wood & Rangarajan, 2003). A minority, less than one-fourth, receives child support (Wood & Rangarajan, 2003). Income from other household members, usually either a parent or an unrelated male, is another source of support, but often other adult household members are disabled or also disconnected (Blank, 2007). Government housing assistance is a potentially critical support, as tenant rent and utility payments are capped at 30 percent of income, but the extent of this receipt among disconnected women is not fully known. One state level report found that only one-fifth of chronically disconnected leavers, those without TANF or earnings for a full five years after their welfare exit, received any type of housing subsidy or assistance (Ovwigho et al., 2011).

Housing Assistance and Welfare Receipt

Substantial overlap exists between the populations eligible for TANF and those eligible for housing assistance. In 2008, 10 percent of U.S. public housing households and 11 percent of Housing Choice Voucher holders, popularly referred to as “Section 8,” received a majority of their income from “welfare” (defined as TANF, General Assistance, or Public Assistance) (HUD, 2008a). In 2002, approximately 30 percent of families receiving TANF also received some form of federal housing assistance (Sard & Waller, 2002). Almost all TANF recipients are eligible for housing assistance, but demand far outstrips supply.

Researchers considering how women manage after leaving TANF have noted the importance of housing assistance to survival strategies. Lein and Schexnayder’s (2007) interviews
of Texans who had recently left TANF found that housing problems affected respondents' abilities to secure and maintain employment, and that 40 percent had lived doubled-up with family or friends in the previous six months. Hunter and Santhiveeran (2005) extracted data from the National Survey of America's Families on families exiting TANF in 1997 and found that 37.7 percent of welfare leavers were unable to pay rent or utility bills. Loprest (2001) used the same source for families exiting TANF between 1995 and 1997, and between 1997 and 1999, and found that 39 percent of leavers in the first wave and 46 percent of leavers in the second wave were unable to pay mortgage, rent, and utility bills in the previous year. A 2008 report on the impact of time limits found that families reaching their federal 60-month time limit were more likely than others to be residents of public housing or receiving rental subsidies (Farrell, Rich, Turner, Seith, & Bloom, 2008). Studies of families leaving welfare have noted their clear reliance on housing assistance. Nagle (2003) noted that half of all Massachusetts households leaving welfare received some form of housing assistance. Nearly one-quarter of welfare leavers in Cuyahoga County, Ohio received housing assistance (Coulton et al., 2001), as did nearly one-fifth of those in two California counties (Mancuso, Lieberman, Lindler, & Moses, 2001).

Despite this evidence supporting differences in housing experiences between welfare leavers and welfare recipients, Loprest and Nichols (2011) found similar housing assistance receipt rates when looking at disconnected women in comparison to other low-income women. In 2008, 20.3% of all low-income single mothers and 20.8% of all disconnected mothers received public housing or housing subsidies (Loprest & Nichols, 2011). It is possible that the differences in housing difficulties and benefit receipt between welfare recipients and leavers in the above studies are because the studies do not distinguish between receipt of public housing and tenant-based housing subsidies. The qualitative and self-report data may be capturing only public housing residents and not voucher recipients, as sample respondents may more easily identify residence in public housing as housing assistance. It is thus particularly important to examine housing assistance types separately when considering the link to disconnection.

It is also possible that the differences in housing experiences
and usage between welfare recipients and welfare leavers are due to state welfare rules in regards to housing assistance. The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996 gave states substantial leeway in designing their program rules. This flexibility has resulted in differences among states, including rules related to how housing assistance is counted in both eligibility for TANF receipt and the determination of grant amounts. Based on author tabulations using the Urban Institute’s Welfare Rules Database, from 2001 to 2007, a little more than one-quarter of the states (13 or 14 states) varied TANF grant amounts based on whether or not the household lived in public or subsidized housing. Between four and five states during this period counted some portion of housing assistance as unearned income in determining eligibility and benefits. And, in any given year during this period, one or two states followed both rules. A housing assistance recipient in a state following either or both of these rules would receive a smaller TANF grant or perhaps not qualify for a grant at all compared to another recipient in a different state, all else equal. Although we are unaware of previous studies examining the impact of these particular state rules on individual receipt, it seems logical that the rates of welfare receipt among housing assistance recipients may vary among states by the way in which the rules consider or do not consider housing assistance.

Housing Assistance, Welfare Receipt, and Employment

Researchers examining the nexus between welfare reform and publicly-assisted housing have focused, for the most part, on the effect that housing assistance might have on welfare recipients’ abilities to secure employment and increase their incomes while reducing their reliance on public assistance. They have sought to understand whether housing assistance serves as an incentive or a disincentive to work, and their findings are relevant to our question on the impact of housing on disconnection. Findings on the short-term effects of housing assistance on employment have been inconclusive, and again have tended not to distinguish between types of housing assistance. Newman (2008) reviewed studies considering the effects of housing assistance on welfare recipients’ success in securing employment. All of the studies reviewed (Bania,
Housing Assistance and Disconnection from Welfare and Work

Coulton, & Leete, 2001; Harkness & Newman, 2006; Lee, Beecroft, Khadduri, & Patterson, 2003; Mancuso et al., 2001; Nagle, 2003; Susin, 2005; Van Ryzin, Kaestner, & Main, 2003; Verma & Hendra, 2003; Verma, Riccio, & Azurdia, 2003; Zedlewski, 2002) show no marked differences between households affected by welfare reform receiving housing assistance and those without it: housing assistance "did not have a muting effect on the stronger incentives to work embodied in welfare reform" (Newman, 2008, p. 909). Shroder's (2002) earlier review of the literature found no persuasive association between housing assistance and employment effects, when considering studies investigating welfare recipients, welfare leavers, and low income families.

Types of Housing Assistance and Outcomes

Although many of the studies on housing assistance and welfare receipt group public housing, housing vouchers, and private assisted housing together, a number of studies look only at housing vouchers, as they often are explicitly intended to support moves to higher-income communities and thus presumably to jobs. Newman, Holupka, and Harkess (2009) found that women receiving housing assistance had higher rates of welfare participation than those who did not, and that differences in employment rates and earnings between women in assisted housing and those not receiving assistance were rarely significant. Olsen, Tyler, King, & Carrillo (2005) found that all types of housing assistance had disincentives on market work, and that the disincentive effects were slightly smaller for recipients of tenant-based housing vouchers as compared to other types of housing assistance. Related research studies, using randomized experimental designs, have focused on the effect of housing voucher receipt on labor supply decisions, with ultimately inconclusive findings (Jacob & Ludwig, 2012; Mills et al., 2006; Sanbonmatsu et al., 2011).

Other research indicates that voucher recipients may be located in physical and social communities that offer more supports than those available to public housing residents. Although the effectiveness of Section 8 vouchers as an employment program has not been determined (Levy, 2010), many agree that voucher recipients live in communities with lower poverty rates and fewer racial minorities than public
housing residents do (Devine, Gray, Rubin, & Taghavi, 2003; Newman & Schnare, 1997). Voucher recipients in the Moving To Opportunity (MTO) demonstration tended to move to lower-poverty neighborhoods at least initially, and these moves were made by recipients of both types of vouchers—those restricted to lower-poverty Census tracts and supported with mobility counseling, as well as those with no such restrictions (Sanbonmatsu et al., 2011). When MTO participants moved to communities with supportive networks, they reported that they felt transformed, in large part due to their feeling of increased safety and security (De Souza Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010).

There also are important structural differences between the two housing programs. Low-income families in public housing have lower housing burdens than those who are voucher holders in most states, because there is less regulatory and administrative flexibility in the public housing program and voucher recipients often can choose to pay more in rent (HUD, 2008b). Approximately 38 percent of voucher holders pay more than 31 percent of their income towards rent (McClure, 2005). Accordingly, with a lower housing burden that is wholly dependent on her income from declared earnings and public benefits, a single mother living in public housing would be more likely to be able to make ends meet without formal income than a woman with a rental subsidy, who might have agreed to a rent that is greater than 30 percent of her formal income. Moreover, almost one-quarter of Section 8 voucher holders stay in their current homes when they qualify for the program (Finkel & Buron, 2001); besides the very substantial difference of a lowered rent burden, therefore, these voucher holders' circumstances are exactly the same as they were before they received Section 8.

The research on Section 8 housing vouchers thus suggests the vouchers serve as a disincentive to employment when comparing recipients to those living in unassisted housing. The likelihood of employment for voucher recipients, however, may be slighter higher than for public housing residents (Mills et al., 2006; Olsen et al., 2005) although there are some conflicting findings on this point. It is also possible that the stronger community and neighborhood characteristics of voucher
recipients will positively influence individual employment outcomes over a longer period of time. Combined with the evidence that voucher recipients are more likely to receive welfare assistance, and that public housing residents have lower rent burdens, the research supports our hypothesis that voucher recipients will experience lower rates of disconnection from both employment and welfare, and motivates our inquiry into the differences in disconnection between public housing residents and voucher recipients.

Methods

Sample and Data Sources

The study's sample comes from the 2001 and 2004 panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and includes single mothers residing in low-income households. Sample criteria and study variables were taken from the month immediately preceding the interview month of each wave because of the seam bias identified by other researchers (Grogger, 2004). Members of the study universe were restricted to female survey respondents who were at least 18 and no older than 54 years old in the first wave of the panel. Wave observations of sample members were included in the dataset for waves in which the woman was identified as the mother of at least one child, reported being divorced, separated, never married, or widowed, and whose total household income was below 200 percent of the poverty line. This income criterion captures a group of women who fall under a traditional definition of low-income.

The purpose of the SIPP is to provide a comprehensive picture of income and program participation among U.S. residents and was designed to allow for evaluations of public programs. The central focus of the data is economic and demographic, with substantial detail on income sources and amounts, employment, public assistance participation, family composition, and residential location. The SIPP interviews members every four months and collects monthly data on income sources. The 2001 panel spans 36 months with 9 waves. The 2004 panel spans 48 months with 12 waves. One limitation of the data for this project is that state identification in the
2001 panel is limited to 45 states and the District of Columbia. The remaining five states are combined into two variables; Vermont and Maine are combined, and North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming are combined. Because state welfare policies differ among North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming and between Vermont and Maine, sample members residing in these states during 2001, 2002 and 2003 were dropped from the final model.

The combination of the 2001 and 2004 panels of the SIPP is ideal for examining the research questions as well as informing policy discussions around how to best assist at-risk families during an economic recession. The 2001 panel is the most recent completed panel post-welfare reform that covers an economic recession as well as a recovery period for comparison purposes. The combination of the 2001 panel with the 2004 panel extends the study time period until 2007 and includes a stable period of economic growth and a policy period with more stable state TANF rules.

State-level data come from two sources, the Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database (WRD) and the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The WRD is a longitudinal database of state-specific TANF rules maintained by the Urban Institute and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families and Assistant Secretary for Program Evaluation. The database contains information on implemented TANF rules for all 50 states and DC as coded from state caseworker manuals and updates. The BLS data were used to obtain state unemployment rates.

**Models**

Multilevel, mixed effects logistic regression was used to examine the influence of variables at the individual-wave level, the person level, and state level. In multilevel modeling, the technique is designed to examine effects at multiple levels, including time observations within an individual case. The current analyses use Maximum Likelihood estimations to produce efficient estimates (Hox, 2002; Luke, 2004). In this case, the model robustly examines the relative importance of state and individual time-varying and time-constant levels. Observations are based on person-interview month cases, in
which each individual contributes cases based on the number of interviews she or he completed and which meet the above described sample criteria. Thus, the dataset is of a hierarchical nature with repeated wave observations over the course of the panel (level 1) nested within individuals (level 2) that are in turn nested within states (level 3). Previous methods of combining variables at different levels have been shown to produce standard errors that are biased downward because often the errors across micro units with the same macro group are not random (Moulton, 1990). The advantages of a multilevel model are also apparent at the person level since multilevel modeling is able to handle longitudinal data with missing or uneven time points. Models were estimated using the xtmelogit command in Stata 12. Logistic regression models were based on the following basic framework:

\[
\text{Disconnected (D) [Logistic regression]} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 I + \beta_2 S + \beta_3 Y + \epsilon
\]

Where:
\(D\) = a dichotomous variable indicating whether a women is disconnected,
\(I\) = a vector of individual-level characteristics,
\(S\) = a vector of variables that specify the state TANF rules and the unemployment rate,
\(Y\) = year dummy variables to control for changes in unobserved trends over time.

The dependent variable is whether or not a sample member is economically disconnected from formal employment, TANF, and SSI. A restricted definition of disconnected was used to capture women whose family earned income, cash assistance and SSI receipt during the interview month is zero.

Independent, individual-level variables come from the SIPP and include the demographic characteristics of: race (measured as a group of dichotomous variables) and age (measured continuously) of the mother, educational attainment (measured as a group of dichotomous variables: less than a high school education, high school graduate or General Educational Development [GED], and at least some college), whether the mother was never married (in comparison to separated, divorced, or widowed), whether the respondent
reported a work-limiting disability, the number of children under 18 residing in the household, the number of adults in the household, and residence in a metropolitan area.

Also, at the individual level two dummy variables indicating residence in public housing and receipt of subsidized rent were included in the model. These variables come from two separate SIPP questions. First, the SIPP asks if the respondent resides in public housing. Second, the questionnaire includes a question about Section 8 receipt. Section 8, renamed the Housing Choice Voucher program in 1998, continued to be the colloquial name for federally-funded housing vouchers during the 2001 and 2004 SIPP panels and to the present. In addition to these federal vouchers, some states and localities fund their own tenant-based rental assistance programs; although the SIPP questionnaire asks specifically about "Section 8," it is possible that respondents may have received such assistance but referred to it as Section 8.

Independent, state-level variables include the unemployment rate and welfare rules. The state unemployment rate controls for macro-level economic influences. Five variables measuring state welfare rules were also included in the model. The choice of state level TANF variables was based on an effort to create a parsimonious model and on their theoretical relationship to disconnection. The first variable is whether or not the state has a cash diversion program. The second measure of state TANF policies is the maximum monthly benefit for a family of three. The third state welfare variable is a composite measure of flexibility based on the Flexibility Index created by Fellowes and Rowe (2004). The Flexibility Index is a scale variable with values ranging from 1 to 12, where higher values indicate higher levels of flexibility in a state’s TANF requirements. The Index is comprised of twelve individual welfare rules relating to exemptions from work activity requirements and to the severity of sanctions. The final two TANF rule variables are dichotomous variables related to the treatment of housing assistance. The first housing variable equals one if a state counts housing assistance as unearned income. The second housing variable equals one if a state takes housing into consideration when determining TANF grant amounts.
Results: Profiles of Disconnection and Housing Types

To describe the characteristics of the sample members, variables are summarized for observations made in the first waves of each panel. Although the multivariate analyses utilizes person-wave observations, the descriptive statistics presented in this section focus on the person characteristics in the first wave of the panel in order to present a picture of the population of interest rather than the units of analyses. During this cross-section, 2,455 single mothers reported household earnings less than 200% of the poverty line and had a valid answer for questions on housing. Of these 2,455 women, 517 (21.0% weighted to the U.S. population) of them were disconnected, defined as reporting no earned income, TANF, or SSI receipt for the family unit during the month preceding the interview. About one-third of the 2,455 women (weighted proportion of 34.3%, n = 841) received some type of housing assistance with more residing in public housing (n = 526) than receiving subsidized rent (n = 315).

Table 1 presents demographic characteristics for these low-income single mothers in the first wave of the panels. Comparisons are made among disconnected women and non-disconnected women residing in public housing, subsidized rent arrangements, and private housing. The average age for the entire sample is 31.4 years, with the age of particular groups ranging from 29.6 (for disconnected public housing residents) to 33.4 years (for disconnected subsidized rent recipients). With two exceptions, differences in other demographic characteristics are more pronounced among the types of housing arrangements than between disconnected and non-disconnected women. For example, in terms of race, approximately half of housing program participants in all subcategories are African American as opposed to about one quarter of those living in private housing. One notable exception to this trend is education level. Disconnected women tended to have lower levels of education, with about two out of five with less than a high school education, in comparison to less than a third of connected women with this lowest level of education. The second exception is residence in a metro area; a smaller proportion (about three out of four) of disconnected women resided in metro areas than did non-disconnected women, with more than four out of five women residing in metro areas.
Table 1. Means and Proportions of Select Characteristics of Single Mothers below 200% of the Poverty Line, Wave 1 Sample Members, Weighted by Final Person Weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disconnected</th>
<th>Non-disconnected</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public housing residents</td>
<td>Subsidized rent recipients</td>
<td>Private housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>29.6 (8.1)</td>
<td>33.4 (10.2)</td>
<td>29.3 (9.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; High school</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work limiting disability</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # of children</td>
<td>1.9 (1.1)</td>
<td>1.9 (1.1)</td>
<td>1.7 (0.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # of adults</td>
<td>1.1 (0.3)</td>
<td>1.2 (0.6)</td>
<td>1.5 (0.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Resident</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n (un-weighted)</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 2001 and 2004 SIPP panels, Wave 1, Sample members are also restricted to those with a valid response to the housing recipiency survey question. Disconnected is defined as reporting zero earnings, TANF, and SSI for the family unit in the month preceding the interview month.
Table 2. Multilevel Logistic Regression Models of Disconnection, Odds Ratios Presented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Effects</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing recipient</td>
<td>1.061 (0.085)</td>
<td>1.221* (0.110)</td>
<td>1.201* (0.111)</td>
<td>1.202* (0.111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public housing resident</td>
<td>0.811+ (0.092)</td>
<td>0.821+ (0.095)</td>
<td>0.804+ (0.094)</td>
<td>0.764* (0.089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized rent recipient</td>
<td>0.565*** (0.071)</td>
<td>0.559*** (0.071)</td>
<td>0.577*** (0.073)</td>
<td>0.570*** (0.072)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American (ref = White)</td>
<td>0.663** (0.097)</td>
<td>0.664** (0.097)</td>
<td>0.626** (0.093)</td>
<td>0.625** (0.093)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (ref = White)</td>
<td>0.945 (0.209)</td>
<td>0.958 (0.213)</td>
<td>0.946 (0.209)</td>
<td>0.957 (0.212)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (ref = White)</td>
<td>0.970*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.970*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.965*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.965*** (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.456** (0.0168)</td>
<td>1.473** (0.171)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; High school (ref = HS grad or equivalent)</td>
<td>0.925 (0.102)</td>
<td>0.945 (0.104)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least some college (ref = HS grad or equivalent)</td>
<td>1.937*** (0.197)</td>
<td>1.931*** (0.197)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>0.960 (0.103)</td>
<td>0.978 (0.105)</td>
<td>0.922 (0.098)</td>
<td>0.940 (0.101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>0.962 (0.041)</td>
<td>0.968 (0.041)</td>
<td>0.954 (0.041)</td>
<td>0.961 (0.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>0.685*** (0.039)</td>
<td>0.680*** (0.039)</td>
<td>0.667*** (0.039)</td>
<td>0.663*** (0.039)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of adults</td>
<td>0.957 (0.109)</td>
<td>0.926 (0.107)</td>
<td>0.976 (0.111)</td>
<td>0.943 (0.109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing counts as unearned income</td>
<td>1.429 (0.383)</td>
<td>1.405 (0.372)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing alters</td>
<td>1.236 (0.250)</td>
<td>1.211 (0.244)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefit amount</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control for years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls for other state variables</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Random Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept for State</td>
<td>0.340* (0.073)</td>
<td>0.337* (0.073)</td>
<td>0.345* (0.077)</td>
<td>0.329* (0.082)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept for Person Effects</td>
<td>2.407* (0.071)</td>
<td>2.404* (0.071)</td>
<td>2.388* (0.071)</td>
<td>2.389* (0.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-7557.16</td>
<td>-7551.45</td>
<td>-7485.19</td>
<td>-7437.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald chi²</td>
<td>147.45</td>
<td>190.72</td>
<td>201.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi² for LR test vs. logistic regression</td>
<td>3206.01</td>
<td>3188.73</td>
<td>3122.78</td>
<td>3065.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value of chi²</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>16,937</td>
<td>16,937</td>
<td>16,937</td>
<td>16,846</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Dependent variable is whether or not a woman is disconnected, defined as reporting no SSI, TANF or earned income for the family during the month preceding the interview month. Odds ratios with standard errors in parentheses are reported. + p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Results: Multilevel Findings

Table 2 contains the results of six multilevel logistic regression models. Model 1 is a null model examining only participation in a housing program. Without controlling for any other independent variables, individuals participating in housing programs have similar odds of being disconnected as those in private housing. An examination of the influences on the person and state level shows that each level of grouping is an important explanation of disconnection. In other words, variation exists among the groups at each level, and observations within the groups, be they persons or states, are not unrelated.

Model 2 separates housing recipients into two groups. The results, found in column 2 of Table 2, indicate that opposite influences of the two types of housing programs account for the null findings in model 1. Examining the influence of public housing residency and subsidized rent receipt separately, those residing in public housing have a statistically significant increase in their odds of being disconnected, specifically 1.22 times the risk of being disconnected, compared to those in private housing. Those who receive subsidized rent have lower odds, but the coefficient is statistically significant only at the 0.10 level. The variance among individual and state level random effects remain similar to those of Model 1.

Models 3A and 3B include controls for individual demographic variables and 3B also includes state level controls. The models differ from Models 4A and 4B because they exclude controls for education level and work-limiting disabilities. In Models 3A and 3B residence in a public housing unit continues to increase the odds of disconnection at a statistically significant level, and receipt of a tenant-based subsidy decreases the odds of being disconnected in comparison to those in private housing at the 0.10 significance level. Results indicate the importance of a number of individual-level characteristics. African American and Hispanic women are less likely to be disconnected, and one’s risk of being disconnected decreases slightly with age. The presence of other adults in the household has a notable impact on one’s likelihood of being disconnected, with each additional adult resulting in a decrease in odds. The addition of state-level variables in Model 3B has little effect, as expected, on the covariates at the individual level. Although
other state controls are included in the model, results for only the two TANF variables related to housing are presented, as they are the policy variables of interest. Neither variable, however, is statistically significant. Counting housing assistance as unearned income has no effect, nor does the policy of altering benefit amounts based on housing assistance.

The inclusion of individual-level variables measuring education level and work-limiting disabilities in Models 4A and 4B alters the statistical significance of the influences of public housing residence and the significance level of subsidized rent receipt seen in Models 3A and 3B. In this last set of models, the increased odds of public housing residents are no longer statistically significant, but the decreased odds of tenant-based housing recipients are now significant at the 0.05 level. Two of the newly added individual variables increase one's likelihood of being disconnected. Those with a work-limiting disability have 1.93 times the odds of being disconnected compared to those without a disability, and those with less than a high school education have 1.46 times the odds of disconnection compared to those with a high school diploma or GED. Women with at least some college have similar odds of disconnection as those with a high school level education. The inclusion of these variables reduces the among-person variance from that of Model 2, but only by a small amount, indicating that they explain only a small portion of why particular women experience a spell of disconnection. State-level fixed effects are added in Model 4B, but do not change the estimates of individual-level influences, and the two state level policy variables are not statistically significant.

Discussion

We found that single mothers living in public housing have increased odds of disconnection from welfare and work in comparison to other low-income women with private housing when controlling for no or a limited number of individual- and state-level variables. When adding additional individual-level controls for disability and education, we found that women who receive tenant-based rent subsidies have decreased odds of economic disconnection in comparison to low-income women in private housing. Findings indicate that state level
welfare rules concerning the treatment of housing assistance did not have an effect on an individual’s risk of disconnection, which suggests that TANF applicants may not be aware of how their states account for housing assistance when determining benefit amounts and eligibility or that these rules are not important in making decisions related to benefit applications.

From a strictly statistical perspective, one could argue that the results in Models 2, 3A and 3B, indicating the importance of both housing program variables, are less important than those of Models 4A and 4B that support the importance of tenant-based subsidies alone. From a practical programmatic and policy perspective, however, the results from Models 2, 3A and 3B are critical in designing interventions and programs, as housing status is an important platform through which policymakers can reach vulnerable families. Public housing residents are more readily identified and programs can more easily be targeted to them than either women with self-identified work-limiting disabilities or those with less than a high school education.

The importance of individual-level influences on disconnection also is relevant to housing status. We suspect that African American and Hispanic women are less likely to be disconnected than White women because, given their greater poverty, they are less likely to have access to unreported forms of cash support via work, child support, or assistance from family and friends. We suspect that the presence of additional adults in the household leads to lower likelihoods of disconnection both because larger households need more income, and thus are more likely to persevere in seeking benefit programs and employment, and because additional individuals in the household may result in eligibility for additional government programs.

Our findings are tempered by two limitations. First, the research does not account for variations in the housing market by time or location. Housing markets can influence housing assistance recipients’ choice of public housing or rental assistance. In a very tight rental housing market, for example, recipients may choose public housing over rental assistance, because they are concerned that they might not be able to locate appropriate housing in the private market. Nationally, the success rate for voucher holders leasing apartments is now at 69 percent (Katz
Housing Assistance and Disconnection from Welfare and Work

& Turner, 2007). In a more relaxed market, recipients might be more likely to opt for rental assistance, because they have more control over their location and housing units, and have the flexibility to move, perhaps to be closer to a work opportunity. The safety, location, and maintenance of public housing projects in a community also may influence whether recipients choose that form of assistance.

Second, the findings suggest the possibility of selection bias in terms of who lives in public housing. Housing assistance may promote or reinforce economic disconnection, but it also may attract households that are disconnected or prone to becoming disconnected. Many anecdotal accounts assume that public housing residents experience more extreme and generational poverty, welfare receipt, and other barriers to employment than voucher recipients, who in some cases actively seek to leave the areas of extreme poverty where many public housing developments are located.

In contrast to most assumptions, however, public housing residents do not look very different from housing voucher recipients overall. In 2008, public housing residents had average annual household incomes of $13,600, compared to voucher holders' average household income of $13,100, and the percentage of households in which the majority of household income was from employment, and those in which the majority was from welfare were also similar. Public housing households have been in their housing longer: on average, 8.7 years in contrast to 6.2 years for voucher households, although they have been waiting for those units for less time, 10 months in contrast to 26 months for voucher households. And public housing households, not surprisingly given the long history of locating public housing developments in distressed neighborhoods, live in Census tracts with higher rates of poverty and of racial minorities (HUD, 2008a). It may be that the characteristics of disconnected single women living in public housing mean that they are more entrenched in poverty than those who receive housing vouchers, but there are no existing data to explore these issues.

Therefore, we acknowledge that these selection issues are important to consider and explore in future work. Based on our findings, disability and lack of a high school education are more important in accounting for economic disconnection.
than public housing residence itself, further suggesting a selection effect based on these factors. Although selection bias may limit our ability to answer our second research question conclusively, it does not weaken our answer to the first question. Our findings regarding the differences in housing type, without other controlling for other characteristics, support the need to use public housing as a platform for outreach and services to these vulnerable families.

Conclusion

Disconnected families are one of the most vulnerable groups ignored by existing social policies. Our research findings add to the empirical understanding of disconnected families by focusing on housing status and its relationship to economic disconnection, a topic that has not been explored in this way by other researchers. The findings also provide timely evidence to current policy discussions around welfare and housing. The continuing discussions and debates related to TANF reauthorization provides an opportunity to create and implement policy that directly addresses the needs of women who might benefit from more intensive casework, more flexible work-related rules, and more extensive safety net support. Moreover, much of the policy and program interventions targeted at public housing over the past two decades have sought to address the disadvantages resulting from public housing's location in high-poverty areas and its concentration of extremely low-income households. Information about disconnected women living in public housing is key to policymakers as they seek to refine these programs, and perhaps integrate greater outreach to this at-risk group and increased collaboration with welfare and work initiatives.

Our study shows that public housing is a place where resources should be concentrated. For many of these disconnected families, public housing is the last safety net keeping them away from homelessness. Because public housing residents are more easily identified and reached than those with self-reported work-limiting disabilities and those with less than a high school diploma, it is relevant to consider seriously the relationship of housing status to disconnection without controlling for disability and education. Additionally, as local public
housing authorities face increasingly tight budgets and need whatever rental income they can collect in order to support their operating budgets, they have an incentive to ensure that all eligible residents are receiving public assistance and other benefits. Our findings support the need for integrated, holistic programs, like that proposed by Blank (2007), which address the multiple needs of vulnerable families, to be top on the TANF reauthorization agenda.

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References


Suicide was the leading cause of unnatural deaths in local jails, accounting for 29% of all jail deaths between 2000 and 2007. Though much literature exists on suicide in jails, very little is qualitative. Additionally, little attention has been focused on how the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide applies to the jail environment. To gain a better understanding of suicide in jails, an interpretive meta-synthesis of three qualitative articles was conducted. The combined sample included thirty-four individuals from three jails. These three articles were analyzed to identify common themes that led inmates to suicide. Three broad categories were identified through constant comparison of the data. These categories are: mental health factors, environmental conditions, and relationship issues. These three broad categories are discussed in relation to the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, demonstrating its application in the jail setting. This information is essential for correctional facilities and staff for use in their day-to-day interactions with inmates. Future research is needed to identify and examine current suicide prevention programs in the United States penal system.

Key words: suicide, jail, incarceration, interpersonal theory of suicide, meta-synthesis

Death by suicide within the corrections system in the United States has been a concern for decades. In 1972, David Ruiz sued the Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) over degrading and dangerous living conditions (Perkinson, 2010). In his class action suit, he alleged that the TDC’s
management of prisons constituted "cruel and unusual punishment." In the landmark decision of 1980, the Fifth Circuit Courts of Appeals ordered that correctional facilities ensure safety for inmates, as well as screen for and treat inmate suicidal ideation, even though Ruiz himself was not suicidal (Hanson, 2010). Although this order was handed down in Texas, the ruling influenced correctional facilities across the country due to Texas' reign as the leading penal system. In order for correctional facilities to receive accreditation from the National Commission for Correctional Health Care, facilities must have a suicide prevention program. The above measures appear to have decreased the rate of inmate suicide with suicide reduced by fifty percent since the Ruiz decision (Hanson, 2010). However, when examining the rate of prison and jail suicides, this problem is still in evidence.

Prevalence of Suicide During Jail Incarceration

Inmates incarcerated in jails are either awaiting trial or able to serve their entire sentence in jail (Konrad et al., 2007). The rate of jail suicides has been held fairly constant since 2000 at the rate of 47 per 100,000 (Hanson, 2010; U.S. Department of Justice, 2005), higher than the suicide rate in the general population of 11.5 (McIntosh, 2010). Suicide was the single leading cause of unnatural deaths in local jails, accounting for 29% of all jail deaths between 2000 and 2007 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). Though many theories of suicide exist, a leading one is the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (Van Orden et al., 2010). To the knowledge of these authors, though there is not yet an application of this theory to jail suicide. The purpose of this qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis is to gain a better understanding of suicide in jails through synthesizing prisoners' experiences across three qualitative studies using the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide as the theoretical framework.

Background

Suicide among state and federal inmates continues to be a serious public health problem across the United States. Although statistics of deaths by suicide have decreased in recent history, the literature still remains firm that suicide within the correctional system is problematic. In fact, in the
United States, suicide is two times more common among prison inmates than in the general population, accounting for over 200 deaths each year (Suto & Arnaut, 2010; U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). Inside U.S. jails, more than 300 inmates commit suicide on a yearly basis, which is over 3 times the rate in State prisons (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005).

The literature differentiates between inmates serving short-term sentences, who are awaiting trial or transfer (referred to as pre-trial inmates) and those that are serving long-term sentences (referred to as sentenced prisoners) (Blaauw, Kerkhof, & Hayes, 2005; Konrad et al., 2007). This grouping is used to identify typical characteristics of individuals that are at-risk for suicidal behavior. Pre-trial inmates who commit suicide are typically male, between the ages of 20 and 25, unmarried, and first-time offenders being held for minor offenses (Blaauw et al., 2005; Konrad et al., 2007). These individuals are often intoxicated at arrest and commit suicide at an early stage of their confinement (Blaauw et al., 2005; Daniel & Fleming, 2005; Konrad et al., 2007). In contrast, sentenced prisoners who commit suicide are older violent offenders who kill themselves after spending an extended period of time incarcerated (Blaauw et al., 2005; Konrad et al., 2007).

There are common factors identified in the literature that both pre-trial inmates and sentenced prisoners encounter that may contribute to the act of suicide. Hayes (1995) suggests there are two major causes of suicide death: (a) jail environments are conducive to suicidal behavior; and (b) these individuals are facing crisis situations. Specifically, there are a large number of inmates who suffer from mental illness or substance-related disorders and have attempted suicide in the past (Cox & Morchauser, 1997; Goss, Peterson, Smith, Kalb, & Brodey, 2002; Hayes, 1999; Konrad et al., 2007). Further, the very isolating environment of incarceration that leads to the loss of social supports and employment are factors cited that contribute to the number of suicide deaths within this population (Cox & Morchauser, 1997; Goss et al., 2002; Hayes, 1999; Konrad et al., 2007). Other common factors prior to inmate suicide may include: experiences with bullying, recent inmate-to-inmate conflicts, disciplinary infractions, or verdict or sentencing information (Konrad et al., 2007). Suicides typically occur by hanging, especially when
individuals are held in isolation, and when staffing is at its lowest, typically at night (Konrad et al., 2007). Ultimately, the feeling of hopelessness, a loss of future options, and narrowing of choices for coping are factors that may lead to suicide (Konrad et al., 2007). Cox and Morchauser (1997) succinctly summarize risk factors to suicide within this environment, stating the cause is:

...the overwhelming stressful impact of the jail environment. This stress is often observed as the initial shock of incarceration, anger or sadness over the ending of a supportive relationship, strong feelings of hopelessness regarding an individual’s criminal justice status, anxiety connected with a court hearing or even emotional trauma following a physical assault. (p. 178)

Theoretical Framework:
Why Do People Kill Themselves?

Due to the prevalence of suicide while incarcerated, examining suicide theory for understanding the phenomenon is essential. Though many theories exist, we chose the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide to explain and better understand suicide and its etiology. According to the theory, there are two interpersonal constructs that lead to suicidal desire: thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness, and one intrapersonal construct: capability to take one’s life. Thwarted belongingness denotes social isolation, which is one of the most significant risk factors associated with lethal suicidal behavior across a lifespan. The individual may report loneliness and the absence of reciprocally caring relationships. Perceived burdensomeness comprises the belief that one is a liability on others, which involves self-hatred, i.e., “my loved ones would be better off if I weren’t here” (Van Orden et al., 2010). The capability to engage in suicidal behavior is different from the desire to engage in suicidal behavior:

According to the theory, it is possible to acquire the capability for suicide, which is composed of both increased physical pain tolerance and reduced fear of death through habituation and activation of opponent processes in response to repeated exposure to physically painful and/or fear-inducing experiences. (p. 585)
Therefore, according to the theory, the presence of thwarted belongingness, perceived burdensomeness, and the capability to engage in lethal suicidal behavior are present in cases of suicide.

Van Orden et al. (2010) list incarceration as an environment that may contribute to the feeling of thwarted belongingness, specifically that of a single jail cell. This facet is consistent with findings examining circumstances surrounding suicide while incarcerated (Hayes, 1997). Under the construct of perceived burdensomeness, family conflict and unemployment are two risk factors that have been identified to contribute to this feeling (Van Orden et al., 2010). Many incarcerated individuals are or have experienced family conflict due to incarceration and unemployment. This facet of the theory is also supported by the literature when examining circumstances around inmate suicide (Suto & Arnaut, 2010). Van Orden et al. (2010) mention that the theory is consistent with the distress of incarceration and may explain the elevated rates of suicide within this setting. Therefore, according to the interpersonal theory of suicide, if these two constructs are present, the only factor remaining is the capability to carry out the suicidal act, which according to statistics, many in this setting possess.

Method

Design

Though there are many approaches to qualitative cross study analysis, we used Aguirre and Whitehill Bolton's (2013) approach, qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis (QIMS) which is tailored to social work research to synthesize the findings of previous qualitative studies concerning factors that may lead to suicide while incarcerated. QIMS is:

a means to synthesize a group of studies on a related topic into an enhanced understanding of the topic of study wherein the position of each individual study is changed from an individual pocket of knowledge of a phenomenon into part of a web of knowledge about the topic where a synergy among the studies creates a new, deeper and broader understanding. ([name deleted to maintain the integrity of the blind review process], p. 8)
QIMS begins with identifying the sample of studies to be synthesized, extracting original themes from the individual studies, and then synthesizing these themes across studies using a constant comparative method where extracted themes are compared with one another continuously, thus evolving into an inductive theory.

**Instrumentation**

As is the norm in qualitative research, the authors are the main instruments in this study, being the mechanism for synthesis across the three studies. Thus, a brief description follows of our credibility to conduct this QIMS.

**First author.** The topic of suicide prevention is one that has intrigued me for years. Although I do not have personal experience with losing someone to suicide, I have spent three years working in emergency and inpatient psychiatric units where I received training on suicide prevention. I have seen first hand the devastation to family, friends, and the individual after an attempt or death by suicide. The choice of examining suicide within a corrections system came about for two reasons. First, it has always been a career goal of mine to work, learn, and try to improve the practices within this setting. Second, there is a lack of literature examining the issue of suicide in the penal system and yet it is a serious issue.

**Second author.** I have served as both a social worker and social work researcher in the area of suicide for over 10 years. My experience ranges from intervening with people poised to take their lives to working with families in the aftermath of such tragic deaths. I also co-developed QIMS, which is employed in this study.

**Sampling Criteria and Process**

Qualitative studies were found using computer databases and reference lists in the English-language literature of social work, medicine, psychology, and criminal justice. Databases searched included: Academic Search Complete, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, MEDLINE, Social Work Abstracts, and Dissertation Abstracts. Keywords used included: suicide, prison, jail, inmates, corrections, incarceration, qualitative, phenomenology, ethnography, and observation. Qualitative studies pertaining to factors that contribute to suicide in jails
Suicide Within United States Jails

were sought. Studies that examined the state of jail health services or mental health factors found while incarcerated were excluded.

Figure I. Quorum Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Phase</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potentially relevant studies screened</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies excluded with reason after abstract review</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies retrieved for more detailed evaluation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies excluded with reason re: criteria</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potentially appropriate studies to include</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies excluded with reason re: fatal flaws</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies included in metasynthesis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of three studies presented in three articles published between 1997 and 2010 were utilized for the QIMS. Two publications (Suto, 2007; Suto & Arnaut, 2010) were found utilizing the same sample population and including identical findings. For the purposes of this meta-synthesis the book by Suto (2007) was only utilized in order to extract quotations. The article by Suto and Arnaut (2010) did not contain quotations and the researchers felt it important to incorporate these quotations. It was not necessary to incorporate the book in the data extraction and analysis process because it provided identical findings.

The total number of men in these samples was 34. All three articles represent individuals incarcerated in jail. These 34 participants were between the ages of 21 and 53, all male, and predominately Caucasian. Hayes (1997) reported on nine suicides that occurred during a twenty-four month period in a large metropolitan jail. For an overview of the demographic make-up of the three articles see Table 1. The three studies included a case study, a study utilizing phenomenology, and a study utilizing an unknown method. These participants’ experiences were utilized to extract themes concerning factors leading to suicidal ideation while incarcerated.
Table 1. Demographics From Articles on Jail Incarceration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors, Date</th>
<th>Tradition and Data Collection Method</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Sample Ages, Race/Ethnicity, Gender</th>
<th>Recruitment Site Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, 1997</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Unknown; Unknown; Male</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, 1999</td>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unknown; Unknown; Male</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suto &amp; Arnaut, 2010</td>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21-53; Caucasian (22), Hispanic (2); Male</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis: Theme Extraction and Theme Synthesis

After each article was read for theme extraction, themes found within that qualitative study as identified by the original researchers were extracted from the article (Table 2). The three included studies were read to determine themes identified by the authors. After the initial identification of the themes, we used the book authored by Suto (2007) in order to identify key quotations associated with each of the themes since the Suto and Arnaut (2010) piece did not include quotations. We felt it was important to use quotations from Suto (2007) to give the theme labels depth and individuality and to maintain the integrity of the original authors' work. Without these quotations, the labels seemed general and susceptible to different interpretations. We were able to synthesize themes across the three studies in order to identify factors in common that led to suicide attempts or death. These themes seen across studies were synthesized into each other, resulting in several categories that combine to reveal a synergistic understanding (Author & Whitehill, under review) of the phenomenon of jail suicide. Throughout this process, the first author triangulated with the second to verify accuracy in evaluation and choice of labels for the common themes.

Synergistic Understanding of Jail Suicide

The results are organized into three overarching themes: mental health issues, environmental factors, and relationship issues. In each overarching theme, subthemes are reviewed in detail. All themes are represented in Table 3.
### Table 2. Theme Extraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors and Year</th>
<th>Extracted Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jail Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes (1997)</td>
<td>Staff Supervision Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues Related to Cell Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues Related to Medical Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Substance Abuse Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental Health Issues, specifically prior suicide attempts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues Related to Court Appearances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Support Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes (1999)</td>
<td>Mental Health Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prior Suicide Attempts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship Issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues Related to Court Appearances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jail Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues Related to Medical Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff Supervision Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suto &amp; Arnaut (2010)</td>
<td>Mental Health Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depressive Symptoms</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symptoms of Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hallucination/Paranoid Ideation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medication-Related Problems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impulsivity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious Beliefs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Relationship Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problems with Family of Procreation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Problems with Family of Origin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Problems with Inmates</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jail Factors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moves within the Jail</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment/Activity-Related Difficulties</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Placement in DSU</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Mental Health Issues**

Seven sub-themes within the overarching theme of mental health issues were identified across the three studies as contributing factors of suicide attempts or deaths. These included: depressive symptoms, symptoms of anxiety, hallucination and/or paranoid ideation, medication-related problems, impulsivity, religious beliefs and prior suicide attempts.
### Table 3. Theme Synthesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synthesized Themes</th>
<th>Authors and Publication Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Health Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptoms (Suto &amp; Arnaut, 2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symptoms of Anxiety (Suto &amp; Arnaut, 2010)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hallucination/Paranoid Ideation (Suto &amp; Arnaut, 2010)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medication-Related Problems (Suto &amp; Arnaut, 2010)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impulsivity (Suto &amp; Arnaut, 2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Beliefs (Suto &amp; Arnaut, 2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Suicide Attempts (Hayes, 1997; Hayes, 1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jail Factors (Hayes, 1997; Hayes, 1999; Suto &amp; Arnaut, 2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Related to Court Appearances (Hayes, 1997; Hayes, 1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision Issues (Hayes, 1997; Hayes, 1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support (Hayes, 1997; Hayes, 1999; Suto &amp; Arnaut, 2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Extracted themes included in synthesized theme with authors and publication year.

**Depressive symptoms.** Depressive symptoms were identified in the synthesized studies as being a contributing factor to suicide (Hayes, 1997; Suto & Arnaut, 2010) as is observed in the general population (Van Orden et al., 2010). Suto and Arnaut (2010) identified five subthemes within the category of depressive symptoms. These subthemes were: depressed mood, depressive thoughts, feelings of hopelessness, feelings of loneliness, and feelings of guilt or shame related to crime. Given that depression has been identified as a contributing factor to suicide in the general population (Van Orden et al., 2010), it is not surprising that depressive symptoms have such depth. One of the participants described his experience with depression saying:

> I got to a point where I just got so low, depressed, and it was just that point where... it’s like there’s a pit and you fall into it. And it’s just darkness. And you are trying to get out but you can’t. Hands are pulling you back down. (Suto, 2007, p. 62)

Another participant explained his struggle with depressive symptoms, saying:

> Sometimes I get to the point when it doesn’t matter to me if I’m alive or not. And I hate getting in that spot
because it's really hard that I know; I don't know what to do ... my son just told me that he is mad at me because I'm back here again. It seems that I just can't do anything right (sobs) ... It wasn't getting better, you know. It kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger, like the snowball effect, you know ... I was hopeless about the whole situation. And my life was hopeless and useless. (Suto, 2007, p. 64)

*Symptoms of anxiety.* In the Suto and Arnaut (2010) study, inmates reported different reasons for experiencing feelings of anxiety. Circumstances around feelings of anxiety were a result of upcoming release, fear about failing parole, or humiliation around beatings or threats by another inmate. One participant explained:

Every time I got close to paroling, I ended up doing something to get me more time. And I'd get really, really close to ... I'll be doing good, and doing what I got to do, and they start talking about we are going to send you home, I'd mess up. And I continued to do that ... I've never cashed a check, I've never collected a paycheck, I've never held a real job, I've never had my driver's license, I've never even balanced a paycheck. (Suto, 2007, p. 69)

Another inmate shared some of the same concerns, saying:

If I came out today, if I left today with what I have up here, if I stayed in Oregon, if I stayed with what I have up here, I'd be on drugs within a week. Because I would do good for a week, I'd try to find a job, and I'd get told by everybody that you're a felon, we don't want you, like I did the last time, and then ... I would have to take the transit bus since I don't have a license anymore, I'd end up downtown taking transit bus from interview to interview for jobs. I'd see some guys that I know, they'd tell me: "M, why you're even looking for a job? I got $200 worth of dope here, I know you could get this off in less than a couple days, why don't you come back to work?" Then I'd be right back in the game, within a week. (Suto, 2007, p. 69)
Hallucination and/or paranoid ideation. Several participants from both the Hayes (1997) and the Suto and Arnaut studies (2010) reported experiencing hallucinations and paranoid ideations. One participant portrayed this experience saying:

Plus the voices in my head, they trick me sometimes ... They act like my sister's voice and then they act like God. I believe that they are God because they give miracles like sunshine: they can make it in low and dark, light. And there will be all kinds of stuff. And I can hear God sometimes. He tells me to sacrifice. (Suto, 2007, p. 72-73)

Medication-related problems. Participants sometimes connected their depressive symptoms to the lack of psychotropic medications available while incarcerated (Suto & Arnaut, 2010). Other related issues included not complying with medication regimens or fearing that being identified as an inmate who was prescribed psychotropic medication would make them vulnerable (Suto & Arnaut, 2010). One participant commented:

I was thinking that they were giving me medications ... at the time I was thinking like, these guys, they are gonna put me on these medications and I'm gonna get out of it. They are gonna take advantage of me and they'd come and beat me up if I'd take these medications. (Suto, 2007, p. 74)

Impulsivity. Within the subtheme of impulsivity, Suto and Arnaut (2010) found that inmates themselves realized a series of events and circumstances which contributed to their suicidal ideation. Further, they also reported that the suicide act was an impulsive one. This phenomenon was not found across all participants. Some reported that the suicide act was planned for a period of time. One participant reflected on the impulsivity saying:

It was kind of spontaneous. It was like here's this situation, what can I do about it? Nothing can happen. I can't get out of the situation. Yes, I can get out of the situation. Alright, that's about my only way out, so it's kind of where I go with it. (Suto, 2007, p. 75)
Religious beliefs. Religious beliefs served as both a protective factor and a suicide risk role for the inmates represented in the study by Suto and Arnaut (2010). One participant believed that religion had helped save his life, saying: “If I kill myself I’m not going to go to heaven. That’s what stopped me in the last minute” (Suto, 2007, pp. 76-77). Another inmate believed quite differently, and spoke of his religious beliefs contributing to suicide saying:

At that point in time, I felt like, you know, if I die, and if I go to hell, then you know if that’s what there is, then obviously I’m not forgiven. But you know, once you’re willing to take that step, you know, it’s like you just got to give up pretty much on everything, you know. (Suto, 2007, p. 77)

Prior suicide attempts. Prior suicide attempts were found to be a contributing factor in both of the studies by Hayes (1997; 1999). Hayes (1997) identified prior suicide attempts as a risk factor for a prisoner who committed suicide while incarcerated. Hayes (1997) wrote:

He was processed and housed in the forensic unit due to a psychiatric history that included at least three prior suicide attempts by hanging several years earlier and a threat of self-injury during his most recent prior incarceration. (p. 403)

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors were identified in all three of the studies as triggers and factors that led to inmate suicide. In the synthesis of these three articles, there were three categories identified by the author.

Jail factors. Jail factors such as moves within the jail, employment/activity-related difficulties, and disciplinary reports all contributed to inmate suicide (Suto & Arnaut, 2010). The jail environment and a feeling of isolation also led to some inmate’s suicidal ideation (Hayes, 1997; Suto & Arnaut, 2010). One participant reported:

Here in prison it’s kind of hard, some people think that you’re somebody that you’re not, they want you to
be someone you’re not. So they pressurize you to do things you don’t want to. They pound on your wall, they make you really irritated ... There’s really nothing you can do about it, you can try to ignore them, but it’s mostly the people that are in prison are the gang-affiliated people. That’s it. They give suicide attempts. I’ve tried to kill myself a few times over the fact that people would never leave me alone. (Suto, 2007, p. 83)

Another participant spoke of jail factors saying:

It’s not that I wanted to be saved: I wanted to scare them ... I guess I almost felt like maybe it’s been rooted in me from the stuff that happened in county that I feel like I wanted them [officers] to see that they’re responsible for what, you know. It’s almost like a get back I guess. It was out of anger like, just a deep anger like, you know. I say that’s why I did that. They asked me before why I did that. I guess I did it for the whole shock. It’s just ‘cause I knew they’d be shocked if they saw a big puddle of blood coming out the door, you know. (Suto, 2007, p. 88)

*Issues related to court appearances.* Hayes (1997) found that inmate suicide was sometimes correlated with court appearances. Hayes (1997) described the circumstances surrounding one inmate’s suicide:

... one day prior to his release, G.H. was informed that a parole board warrant had been issued that would continue his incarceration pending a revocation hearing. Shortly thereafter, a mental health worker passed G.H.’s cell and noticed that a blanket hanging on his door was obstructing visibility into the cell. She called out to G.H. who responded that he was using the toilet. She departed without further inquiry. Less than 30 minutes later an inmate walking down the corridor found G.H. hanging by a sheet from the cell door. (p. 402)

*Supervision issues.* Staff supervision issues were called into question in the circumstances surrounding a number of these
deaths. Hayes (1997) wrote of one inmate's suicide saying: "Although the last recorded security check was an hour earlier, it is not known when C.D. was last physically observed by staff because a towel was covering his door" (p. 401). Another participant’s suicide was after an attempt to connect with a mental health worker (Hayes, 1997). Hayes wrote about this inmate’s circumstances:

...a correctional officer observed O.P. crying, complaining that he was depressed and tired of being locked down. Approximately 30 minutes later, O.P. asked to speak with a mental health worker regarding his protective custody status, but the worker refused to talk with him. A few minutes later O.P. asked to speak to a physician’s assistant who was on the unit conducting a sick call, but was informed that he would have to wait until sick call was completed. O.P. returned to his cell and several inmates observed him hanging by a sheet from the cell door 20 minutes later. (p. 404)

Relationship Issues

Social support. Lack of social support and isolation were also found to be contributing factors that led to inmate suicide (Hayes, 1999; Suto & Arnaut, 2010). In the case study reported by Hayes (1999), G.M. had little contact with his family and threatened to kill himself if his wife filed for divorce. Hayes (1999) wrote about the incident saying: “During one telephone call, he told his wife that he was tearing his bed sheet into strips” (p. 9). G.M. was referred to the mental health staff and his cell was checked on an hourly basis, but G.M. was still able to kill himself.

Suto and Arnaut (2010) identified four categories within relationship issues. These categories were: relationship problems with family of origin, with family of procreation, with inmates, and with staff (Suto & Arnaut, 2010). One inmate spoke of his relationship problems with his children saying: “My kids mean so much to me. You wouldn’t know because I put myself in here, it seems such an oxymoron but I hadn’t seen them” (Suto, 2007, p. 80). Another inmate spoke of a conversation he had with a family member with whom he was having problems. He reported:
I told her, "This isn’t working out, I’m done, you know, I’m out." And she said, "You’ve said this a hundred times, you either need to do it or you need to stop saying it." So I said, "Well, if that’s how you feel." I hung up on her. And I went back to my bunk, and I let the emotions that I had been dealing with her get to me, and I said, "You know what, forget this. I’m not going to even go to the hole [solitary confinement]. I’m just going to do it from here [attempt/complete suicide at current cell]. (Suto, 2007, p. 81)

Discussion

Through constant comparison of the three identified articles, three major categories of factors were illustrated that may contribute to suicide attempts or suicide deaths while incarcerated. These included mental health and environmental factors and relationship issues that, not surprisingly, are well documented as having various associations with risk for suicide.

It is not surprising that these same factors may assist in identifying inmates at risk for death by suicide. However, in this discussion, we further conceptualize how these three major categories demonstrate the interpersonal theory of suicide’s three constructs: thwarted belongingness, perceived burdensomeness and the acquired capability for suicide (Van Orden et al., 2010).

Thwarted Belongingness

Thwarted belongingness, as conceptualized by Van Orden et al. (2010), has two dimensions: loneliness and absence of reciprocal care. The three studies we synthesized demonstrate this aspect clearly yet indicate some uniqueness. At the most basic consideration of thwarted belongingness, it is natural to conceptualize that going to jail would thwart one’s belongingness in the general population and one’s social networks of family, friends, and work relationships due to the separation from these groups and the isolation of the single jail cell (Van Orden et al., 2010). The words of the participants in these studies demonstrate a complexity of the two dimensions as related to the jail setting. Specifically, this is demonstrated as
one participant indicates, "I've tried to kill myself a few times over the fact that people would never leave me alone" (Suto, 2007, p. 83). This is somewhat counterintuitive to the loneliness dimension of the construct. However, the longer quotation (see Jail factors) from this person indicates that though there was social interaction for him, the nature of it was not helpful in relation to meeting the need for belongingness. Rather, it amplified the absence of reciprocal relationships which include mutual care and support.

Likewise, for another who indicated he tried to kill himself to shock the officers (see quotation in Jail factors), his words demonstrate that he was responding to the lack of a reciprocal, caring relationship. These examples support Van Orden et al.'s assumption that belongingness is not categorical; the nature of the social interactions in one's life are what determine the level of belongingness felt by a person.

A separate complexity in this construct of its manifestation in jail relates to increasing one's belongingness through being reunited with the general population, family, friends, and work relationships. Again, on the surface, jail release, it seems, would logically instill hope for the reinstigation of reciprocal relationships and alleviation of loneliness. For one jail prisoner, this was certainly the case. When he learned one day before his scheduled release that his incarceration might be extended, he killed himself (see Issues related to court appearances). However, for two others, rather than release being a solution, they indicated that leaving the jail confines would result in further thwarting the feeling of belongingness; both of them expressed beliefs that release would actually be worse than remaining incarcerated (see quotations in Symptoms of anxiety). While this fear of release is easily understood for the long-term prison inmate, it is somewhat unexpected from a jail situation where sentences are shorter.

Perceived Burdensomeness

Perceived burdensomeness has two dimensions: liability, e.g., "others are better off if I'm dead," and self-hatred (Van Orden et al., 2010). According to VanOrden et al. (2010), incarceration is situated in the liability dimension of the perceived burdensomeness construct. Perhaps the most poignant
depiction of this dimension is in the quote given earlier, the last sentence of which demonstrates the self-hatred dimension as well:

Sometimes I get to the point when it doesn’t matter to me if I’m alive or not ... my son just told me that he is mad at me because I’m back here again. It seems that I just can’t do anything right (sobs) ... my life was hopeless and useless. (Suto, 2007, p. 64)

Acquired Capability for Suicide

Our survival instinct, especially related to avoiding death, is a well-understood characteristic of human nature, making suicide difficult to comprehend. Van Orden et al. (2010), in the interpersonal theory of suicide, indicate that the three constructs of the theory—thwarted belongingness, perceived burdensomeness, and the acquired capability for suicide—must be present for a person to be able to take his or her own life. A desire to die by suicide due to the difficulties of thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness are not sufficient without the acquired capability to commit suicide. The two dimensions of this construct are lowered fear of death and an elevated tolerance for physical pain (Van Orden et al., 2010). Situated here are previous suicide attempts and serotonergic dysfunction. In their testing of the interpersonal theory of suicide, Van Orden et al. (2010) identified that the number of suicide attempts was positively correlated with acquired capability to suicide. One of the studies in our QIMS included the experience of a man with at least three attempts who eventually died by suicide (see Prior suicide attempts; (Hayes, 1997).

Serotonergic dysfunction has been indicated as a component of many mental health problems, including but not limited to alcoholism, aggression, eating disorders, depression and schizophrenia. Many examples of mental health issues have been provided in this meta-synthesis, but to highlight how this may contribute to the acquired capability for suicide, one participant’s description of his depression illustrates the depth of this feeling:

I got to a point where I just got so low, depressed, and it was just that point where ... it’s like there’s a pit and
you fall into it. And it's just darkness. And you are trying to get out but you can't. Hands are pulling you back down. (Suto, 2007, p. 62)

Practice and Policy Implications

Through the identification of each of the categories of results in this QIMS and the illustration of how these demonstrate the interpersonal theory of suicide, the implications for practice and policy seem evident. The identification of common themes that may contribute to death by suicide and the understanding of the interpersonal theory of suicide can be used to educate those working in corrections. Staff can be taught about signs to look for, such as depression, social isolation, anxiety, hallucinations, and others addressed in this review. Staff can also be made aware of factors such as court appearances, relationship problems with family, inmates, or other staff to look for in order to assist in the prevention of death by suicide.

Though the results of this QIMS demonstrate the interpersonal theory of suicide as it relates to incarceration in a jail, the results also have implications for informing policies and practices in the jail setting. Specifically, environmental factors identified in the QIMS did not only relate to the experience of the incarcerated individual, but also to systemic issues that should be addressed as part of a strategy to prevent suicides in jails. Of particular interest are the staff supervision issues and the connection made between court appearances and suicide.

The staff supervision issues found in the synthesized literature indicates the need for training and education within the corrections system. Two examples are particularly poignant—one indicating a need for understanding the importance of responding to an inmate clearly seeking help in saving his own life, and another related to understanding the impact of prior suicide attempts on the likelihood of the person dying by suicide. In the first example, the inmate had asked for help on three occasions within about an hour and was denied all three times; inmates noticed him hanging in his cell 20 minutes later (Hayes, 1997). Had his cry for help been heeded any of those three times, he might still be alive. In a similar instance where staff had a clear and documented reason to be on watch for a potential suicide, an inmate with a history of suicide attempts
was "processed and housed in the forensic unit" (Hayes, 1997, p. 403), yet still was able to kill himself. This brings up many questions as to the nature of safety measures in place to save lives.

Perhaps the central issue related to these opportunities for improving practice and policy in relation to suicide prevention in jails is that the inmate population is often a forgotten one, and is sometimes referred to as the population that society would like to forget. As social workers, we are called, as expressed in our codes of ethics, to remember, honor and protect the inherent dignity and worth of each person. Therefore, it is a duty to ensure that inmates receive quality care and protection while incarcerated. Research about factors that lead to inmate suicide is an important area in order to ensure their safety. It is also an area of research that needs more attention.

In fact, if one considers the three constructs presented by the interpersonal theory of suicide in the jail setting, two questions emerge: (1) Why are there not more suicides in prison? and (2) What protective factors are in place that prevent more inmates from dying by suicide? Feelings of thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness are easy to comprehend when considering the jail population—incarceration engenders and exacerbates these two constructs, as demonstrated in this QIMS. Acquisition of the capability for suicide may have occurred in the time previous to incarceration through violent crimes or may develop through the increased incidences of verbal and physical violence experienced in the jail environment. Considering the increased risk for development of these three aspects of the interpersonal theory of suicide, the explanation the theory provides of jail suicide, though enlightening on one level, is also bewildering on another.

Given the demonstrated aspects of the theory in this study, the question of why there are not more suicides in jails and other incarcerations remains a glaring gap in the empirical literature. Future research is needed to determine differences between those who attempt suicide or die by suicide and those who do not, when all are faced with many similarities in terms of environmental conditions that would engender thwarted belongingness, perceived burdensomeness, and acquired capability for suicide. Policy within the correctional facilities in the area of screening and services can benefit from this body
of research. Future research must continue in this area, be expanded, and also explore the state of prevention programs in the United States within the penal system. As prevention programs are identified, improvements and practice changes can begin to be made to ensure the safety of this often forgotten population.

References


Hayes, L. M. (1999). Suicide in adult correctional facilities: Key ingredients to prevention and overcoming the obstacles. *Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics, 27*(3), 1-17.


Welfare Reform in the States: Does the Percentage of Female Legislators in State Legislatures Affect Welfare Reform Policies?

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My research tests the proposal that female legislators have issue-specific political agendas and that female representation may affect these issues. Welfare is an issue that affects women and children to a larger degree than it does men. To test this hypothesis I use three measures of welfare sanctions and one measure of overall welfare environment as dependent variables. Results indicate that the level of female legislators does not have the expected impact on two of the three sanction policies, but it does have the expected impact on the overall welfare environment.

There is much debate surrounding the issue of women and politics. This debate has lead to several pertinent questions concerning gender and policy. Do women legislators have different political agendas from their male counterparts (Wolbrecht, 2002)? Are there issues that are specifically “female” in nature; such as, welfare reform, health care, child care, abortion, etc. (Carroll, 2002)? Does female representation have a descriptive or substantive effect on the political process (Bratton & Ray, 2002; Carroll, 2002)? Do female legislators view policy issues differently from male legislators (Kathlene, 1995)? Do elected female officials affect policy outcomes (Swers, 2002)? While all of these questions address important research concerns, the last question is the focus of my research.

My research tests the proposal that female legislators have issue-specific political agendas that differ somewhat from those of their male counterparts. This is not to say that male legislators do not agree with female legislators on particular
issues and vice-versa; party identification, constituent concerns, etc. can and do influence elected officials' issue stances. However, female legislators may bring different perspectives and concerns to certain issues. For instance, welfare is an issue that affects women and children to a larger degree than it does men. As such, welfare reform, which encompasses issues like health care and child care for low-income women and children, may be of particular interest to female legislators.

If the premise that female legislators have specific political agendas that differ somewhat from those of their male counterparts is accepted, a logical question follows: Do female legislators affect legislative outcomes? Specifically, does the proportion of female legislators in state legislatures affect welfare policies?

Welfare Reform

In 1996 the Republican Congress passed, and President Clinton signed into law, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). PRWORA ended the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and replaced it with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Two major, and controversial, components of TANF that distinguish it from the previous AFDC program are: first, recipients were life limited to 60 cumulative months of receiving benefits and, second, work requirements for continued assistance were established. Single parents must work at least 20 hours per week the first year, increasing to at least 30 hours per week by fiscal year 2000. Two-parent families must work 35 hours per week by July 1, 1997. Further, TANF granted states the autonomy to "experiment" with welfare reform by allowing states the option of instituting additional, even harsher, sanctions on welfare recipients.

Examples of options available to states under TANF are: reducing the lifetime limit of 60 months' assistance that welfare recipients can collect benefits to fewer months, shortening the work requirement time limit, and instituting "family caps" on recipients which place limits on the number of additional children for which recipients can receive additional benefits. In addition to the new and creative sanctions introduced in TANF, it provides for performance bonuses to states that are successful
in reducing welfare rolls by moving welfare recipients from welfare and into the workforce. This provision worried many that there would be a "race to the bottom" of benefits offered among states, the theory being that welfare recipients would leave states with harsher sanctions and take up residency in states with milder sanctions, which, in turn, would cause these states to adopt harsher sanctions in an attempt to reduce welfare rolls and further migration. Research on whether welfare recipients actually migrate to "easier" states is mixed (Berry, Fording, & Hanson, 2003; Peterson & Rom, 1989), but the concept exists and may influence decisions made on welfare reform by state legislatures. For example, Vartanian, Soss, Schram, and Baumohl (1999) find marginal support for male welfare recipients moving to obtain better welfare benefits. They conclude that factors other than welfare benefits impact where people choose to live. In addition, individuals dependent upon welfare do not have funds needed for frequent moves.

Whether states adopt sanctions on welfare recipients is the focus of my paper—specifically whether states adopt work requirement sanctions, family cap sanctions, and lifetime TANF limits of less than 60 months. The overall state welfare "environment" will be analyzed as well. Research on TANF welfare reform points to several factors that may influence state decisions on welfare sanction policies. These include: legislature party makeup; state poverty rates; state total taxable resources (TTR); state per-capita income; state unemployment rate; and percent state minority populations, to name a few. Of interest here is how and if the percentage of female legislators in a state legislature influences welfare sanction policy. My research hypothesis is: as the percentage of female legislators in a state legislature increases, the state legislature will be less likely to adopt sanction policies on welfare recipients and more likely to create a "friendlier" welfare environment.

Data and Methods

Four dependent variables have been operationalized for analyses. These dependent variables represent specific policy outcomes (welfare policy was adopted) and measures
of overall policy environments (type of welfare environment created by adopted policies).

The first three dependent variables were identified by Soss, Schram, Vartanian, and O'Brien (2001) as indicators of "tough" welfare sanctions; these are dichotomous variables that will be used in logit regressions. Logit regressions allow for an analysis of how each of the independent variables affects the probability of an event occurring, in this case, the probability of sanction policies being adopted. The first dependent variable scored states depending on whether they adopted harsher work time limit policies than required by TANF. The "Work Time Limit" variable was coded zero if the state allows a maximum of 24 months before an able-bodied recipient must find employment and one if the work time limit is shorter.

The second dependent variable scored states depending on whether they adopted a family cap policy. States adopting a family cap provide either no increase in TANF benefits or reduced benefits to women who have additional children while on welfare. The "Family Cap" variable was coded zero if the state did not adopt a family cap and one if it did.

The third dependent variable scored states depending on whether they adopted harsher lifetime limit policies than required by TANF. The "Lifetime Limit" variable was coded zero if the limit is 60 months and one if it is less than 60 months. In these three dummy variables, zeros represent national TANF standards and ones represent harsher, state-imposed sanctions. Therefore, positive coefficients in the logit regressions represent increased probability of sanction adoption.

The final dependent variable represents welfare environments created by overall policy adoption. This variable is ordinal in nature. As such, ordinal logit regressions will be utilized in the subsequent analysis. This variable, "Welfare Reform Score," was developed by Meyers, Gornick, and Peck (2002) and is based on their analysis of cash assistance, food assistance, disability assistance, tax policy, and unemployment compensation in each state. They identified states in terms of adequacy: the generosity of benefits received by welfare recipients; inclusion: the extent to which benefits reach those in need; and state policy commitment: a measure that includes policy choices that shape the availability, accessibility, extensiveness,
or quality of family assistance programs. States were then grouped into one of five categories—minimal, limited, conservative, generous, and integrated—depending on their performance on the above mentioned issues (Meyers et al., 2002). States are coded from a low of one (minimal) to a high of five (integrated). Given this coding, states that rank higher on this variable are considered more progressive on welfare policy. Summary statistics for dependent variables are provided in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Time Limit</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Cap</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime Limit</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Reform Score</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The independent variables included in the logit regressions are often cited as predictors of policy outcomes in welfare policy research. Table 2 provides summary statistics for independent variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Female Legislators</td>
<td>22.58</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
<td>12.09</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td>9.69</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTR Per Capita Index</td>
<td>98.12</td>
<td>18.71</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>162.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Democrat Legislators</td>
<td>52.92</td>
<td>14.76</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>86.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalistic</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The independent variables used are: Percent Female Legislators 2005, Poverty Rate 2005, Unemployment Rate 2005, Percent Black 2005, Total Taxable Resources (TTR) Per Capita Index 2005, Percent Democrat Legislators 2005, Individualistic
Political Culture, and Traditionalistic Political Culture. The independent variable of interest in my analyses is the percentage of female legislators in each state legislature for the year 2005 (Percent Female Legislators: 2005). Values for this variable were acquired from the Women’s Legislative Network of National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). Figure 1 reports the percentage of female legislators in each state legislature. As indicated earlier, I predict that states with higher percentages of female legislators will be less likely to adopt welfare sanctions than will states with lower percentages of female legislators. In other words, as the percentage of female legislators increases, the probability of welfare sanctions being adopted will decrease and welfare policy environments will improve; these coefficients are hypothesized to be positive in the three logit regressions and positive in the ordinal logit regression as well.

Figure 1. Percentage of Female Legislators
The next three independent variables in the model specifications are intended to measure population parameter influences on welfare sanction policies and overall welfare policy environments. These include "Poverty Rate: 2005," "Unemployment Rate: 2005," and "Percent Black: 2005." Values for these variables were provided by the U.S. Census. I predict that states with higher poverty rates will be more likely to adopt welfare sanctions and the welfare policy environment will decline. This need not be seen as punishment but, instead, as a means of getting the unemployed employed—research has shown that poverty rates decline as unemployment rates decline (Blank, 1997, 2002; Hoynes & MaCurdy, 1994).

Much of the same logic behind poverty rate influence on welfare policies is found in unemployment rate influence on welfare policies. In an attempt to move welfare recipients back into the workforce, I predict that states with higher unemployment rates will be more likely to adopt welfare sanctions and the welfare policy environment will decline.

Finally, Fording (2003) argues that there is a racial component to welfare reform. Given Fording's argument, I predict that states with higher percentages of Blacks will be more likely to adopt welfare sanctions and the welfare policy environment will decline.

Next I added a measure of state economies. As would be expected, there is a wealth of literature pertaining to state economics and levels of welfare support/reform (Blank, 1997; Garfinkel, Rainwater, & Smeeding, 2004; Moller, Huber, Stephens, Bradley, & Nielsen, 2003; Rainwater & Smeeding, 2003). While there are several state economic variables that could be included in these models, economic measures, when grouped in one model, generally suffer from high degrees of multicollinearity. To avoid this problem, I settled on one measure of state economics—"Total Taxable Resources Per Capita Index: 2005." TTR is a detailed measure of state fiscal capacities comprised of several state economic indicators (e.g., gross state product, federal indirect business taxes, dividend incomes, net realized capital gains, etc.). Values for TTR were collected from the Department of Commerce. Because states with higher TTR are better able to fund welfare programs (Tannenwald, 1999), I hypothesize that states with higher TTR values will be less likely to adopt welfare sanctions and welfare policy environments will improve.
Next I included a measure representing the percentage of Democrats in each state legislature. Here again there is a wealth of literature pertaining to party balance and levels of welfare support/reform (Brown, 1995; Fellowes & Rowe, 2004; Hero & Preuhs, 2007; Holbrook & Van Dunk, 1993; Keiser, Mueser, & Choi, 2004; Smith, 1997). Where party balance and welfare support/reform is concerned, the consensus of research finds that Democrats are more supportive of welfare policies. This variable, "Percent Democrat Legislators: 2005," is simply the percentage of each legislature comprised of Democrats. Values for this variable were collected from the NCSL. Because Democrats are generally perceived to be more favorable to the plight of the poor, I predict that states with higher percentages of Democratic legislators will be less likely to adopt welfare sanctions and welfare policy environments will improve.

Last, I include an independent variable that taps measures of state political culture. "State Political Culture" utilizes Elazar's (1970) state political culture classifications of moralistic, individualistic, or traditionalistic. States with a moralistic political culture view the overall society as more important than the individual; states with an individualistic political culture limit community/government intervention into private activities; and states with a traditionalistic political culture limit government to securing the existing social order. Obviously, some states encompass aspects of more than one political culture. For my research, states are classified by the dominant political culture as identified by Elazar. Because multinomial variables cannot be used as independent variables in regression analysis, two dummy variables were created with moralistic state political cultures as the reference category (coded as zero in both variables) and individualist and traditionalist political cultures were coded as one in alternate variables. Given this coding, I predict that states with individualistic and traditionalistic political cultures will be more likely to adopt welfare sanctions and welfare policy environments will decline.

Results

The logit regressions on the dichotomous dependent policy sanction variables produced interesting, albeit somewhat
tempers results. As can be seen in Table 3, several of the coefficients are in the predicted directions, with some notable exceptions. When interpreting logit coefficients it is important to remember how the dependent variables were coded—zero represents sanction policy not being adopted; positive coefficients indicate that sanction policies are more likely to be adopted.

Foremost among the notable exceptions is the percent female legislators coefficient for the family cap and lifetime limit sanctions; they are positive instead of the predicted negative. This indicates that increasing levels of female legislators increases the probability of stiffer family cap and lifetime limit sanctions. These results could indicate that female legislators do not want to reward reckless behavior (having more children while on welfare) and that 60 months is too long a period for individuals to receive welfare benefits. Where work time limits are concerned, the coefficient for level of female legislators is negative as expected. This finding is intuitive, as female legislators may better understand the difficulties of working mothers. Equally surprising, poverty rate is negative in the family cap and lifetime limit models, meaning that as poverty rates increase, harsher sanctions are less likely. This may indicate that states react to the needs of citizens instead of welfare politics. Unemployment rates produced interesting results for two of three sanction policies as well. However, it is in the predicted direction for work time limits, which is the only sanction policy of the three directly related to getting welfare recipients back to work. Family caps and lifetime limits may be seen as punishments unrelated to unemployment levels and therefore may not be affected by unemployment rates.

Percent Black was in the predicted direction across all three sanction policies and, in the family cap model, the coefficient was significant (at the .05 level). These results indicate that levels of state Black populations are good predictors of sanction policies, especially where family caps are concerned. Further, that the family cap coefficient was significant for percent Black may reflect a racial component to welfare policy.

TTR levels were as predicted in two of three models (work time and lifetime limits). The negative work and lifetime limit coefficients may reflect an ability to fund TANF for the entire
24 and 60 months and the positive family cap coefficients may reflect an unwillingness to sanction certain behaviors, regardless of revenue. Finally, the percent Democratic legislators coefficients were in the predicted direction in two of the three specifications—family cap and lifetime limits. That the work time limit coefficient was positive is interesting and may reflect that Democratic legislators do not want to be seen as sanctioning a policy that rewards welfare recipients for not taking steps to move from welfare to work.

Table 3: Logit Models of Welfare Sanction Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Work Time Limit</th>
<th>Family Cap</th>
<th>Lifetime Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Female Legislators</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.058)</td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
<td>(0.072)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Democrat Legislators</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td>-0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
<td>(0.025)</td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTR Per Capita Index</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>-0.197</td>
<td>-0.212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.378)</td>
<td>(0.415)</td>
<td>(0.602)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.121*</td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.046)</td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.063)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>-0.336</td>
<td>-0.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.201)</td>
<td>(0.218)</td>
<td>(0.264)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>2.311*</td>
<td>0.868</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.102)</td>
<td>(1.042)</td>
<td>(1.368)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalistic</td>
<td>11.098</td>
<td>2.221</td>
<td>1.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.266)</td>
<td>(1.452)</td>
<td>(1.771)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.193</td>
<td>2.683</td>
<td>3.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.947)</td>
<td>(4.043)</td>
<td>(4.742)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psuedo r²</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Likelihood</td>
<td>-27.98</td>
<td>-25.95</td>
<td>-18.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: standard errors in parenthesis. *p < .05
The state political culture variables produced predicted results. Both coefficients were positive and the individualistic coefficient in the work time limit model was significant (at the .05 level). Given that individualist state political cultures place the needs of the individual over those of the society, this result is not surprising.

Next I calculated predicted probabilities of sanction policies being adopted depending on the percentage of female legislators in state legislatures (Spost, developed by Long and Freese, was used to generate predicted probabilities). To do so, I varied the percentage of female legislators from its minimum value (8.8) to its maximum value (34), while holding all other variables at their mean value. The difference between the minimum and maximum value (subtracting the minimum value from the maximum value) is representative of the "change" in probability of sanctions being adopted. Positive change indicates an increased probability of sanctions being adopted, while negative change indicates a decreased probability of sanctions being adopted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Predicted Probabilities of Welfare Sanction Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Time Limit Sanction*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Cap Sanction*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime Limit Sanction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < .05

The predicted probabilities displayed in Table 4 shed light on the affect of percent of female legislators on the probability of sanction policies being adopted. Two sanction policy performed as hypothesized—family cap and lifetime limit. Where the family cap and lifetime limit policies are concerned, varying the percent female legislator variable from its minimum to its maximum value generated predicted negative probabilities. Predicted probabilities for family cap sanctions indicate a 28 percent decreased probability of family cap sanctions being adopted as the percent of female legislators increases; this difference is statistically significant (at the .05 level). Predicted probabilities for lifetime limit sanctions indicate a 14 percent decreased probability of lifetime limit sanctions being adopted.
as the percent of female state legislators increases. Where work
time limits are concerned, when the number of female state
legislators is at its minimum value, there is a 42 percent pre-
dicted probability of work time limit sanctions being adopted.
Conversely, when female state legislators is at its maximum
value, there is a 57 percent predicted probability of work time
limit sanctions being adopted. More directly, varying the per-
centage of female state legislators from its minimum (8.8) to
its maximum (34) value results in a 15 percent increase in the
probability that work time limit sanctions will not be adopted,
and the difference is significant (at the .05 level).

I next ran an ordinal logit regression on the welfare reform
score dependent variable (see Table 5). When interpreting the
coefficients in Table 5 it is important to remember how the
dependent variable was coded. The dependent variable was
coded from one to five with one representing minimal welfare
policies and five representing integrated welfare policies; two
represents limited welfare policies, three represents conserva-
tive welfare policies, and four represents generous welfare pol-
ices. Given this coding, the percent female legislators is in the
predicted direction. Additionally, percent Democratic legisla-
tors, poverty rate, individualistic and traditionalistic state po-
litical cultures are all in the predicted direction. Unemployment
rate was predicted to be negative but is positive and TTR was
predicted to be positive but is negative. Most surprising is
that percent Black, which was predicted to be negative, was
positive.

These results indicate that the percentage of female legisla-
tors does have a positive effect on the overall welfare environ-
ments in states. While one of the individual sanction policies
(work time limit) presented in the logit models did not yield
predicted results, the percent female legislators in a given
state may play a more important role in the formulation of
overall welfare policy, which then creates a friendlier welfare
environment.

Predicted probabilities were run on the welfare reform
score dependent variable as well. Here again, percent female
legislators was varied from its minimum to its maximum
values while holding all other variables at their mean values.
This process created five predicted probabilities for the
welfare reform score dependent variable. Each set of predicted
probabilities provides percentages for each category within the ordinal dependent variables.

Table 5: Ordinal Logit Welfare Reform Score Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Female Legislators</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Democrat Legislators</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTR Per Capita Index</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
<td>-0.429</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>-1.049</td>
<td>0.901</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalistic</td>
<td>-19.624</td>
<td>1445.976</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut Point 1</td>
<td>-22.055</td>
<td>1445.981</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut Point 2</td>
<td>-4.435</td>
<td>3.478</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut Point 3</td>
<td>-2.114</td>
<td>3.469</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut Point 4</td>
<td>-0.213</td>
<td>3.506</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo r²</td>
<td>= 0.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Likelihood</td>
<td>= -46.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>= 50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Predicted probabilities for welfare reform showed minimal changes in all five categories. While the predicted probability changes were minimal, they were in the expected direction. Changes for the minimal and limited categories were negative, while changes in the conservative, generous, and integrated categories were positive. These changes indicate that as the percentage of female legislators increased, so did the probability of a state having an overall friendlier welfare environment.

**Conclusion**

My research findings are in line with the literature regarding the effect of female legislators on policy outcomes, which is to say "it depends" or "sometimes." More specifically, the effectiveness of female legislators in state legislatures is tempered or enhanced by other factors. Do female legislators, a minority in every state, go along for the sake of getting along? Meaning,
do female legislators, upon entering the "good ol' boy" world of politics, consciously or subconsciously decide not to rock the political boat by not addressing issues of concern to them or by adopting more male-oriented policy issues? This is more likely to occur in legislatures with small minorities of female legislators. When the numbers of female legislators increase, there can be a "tipping" effect whereby they are emboldened by their numbers and become more effective at addressing issues that concern them.

There are, of course, institutional factors that affect whether females are elected as legislators and, once elected, that affect female legislator effectiveness as well. Nominating/primary processes can favor male candidates and leadership positions can be difficult for females to secure.

Where specifics are concerned, one possible explanation for the counterintuitive results regarding percent female state legislators on work time limit sanctions may be found in the state political culture; that is, state political culture may be the driving force behind policies adopted in individual states. This argument implies that elected officials act in accordance with the political culture of their states regardless of their gender or party affiliation. Compare, for example, Democrats in Texas with Democrats in Massachusetts. Texas Democrats are likely to be more conservative than Massachusetts Democrats. These characteristics are likely to transcend gender. Therefore, even if it is assumed that female Democrats in Texas are more liberal on certain issues than are male Democrats in Texas, they are not likely to be as liberal on these issues as are female Democrats in Massachusetts. If these assumptions are accepted, then sanction policy outcomes in particular states, regardless of the percent of female legislators, are the product of the state political culture. Of course, other factors (party composition, TTR, race, poverty, etc.) can and do influence policy outcomes, but these factors may, in part, be the product of state political cultures as well.¹

One last point is worth restating. The model presented in Table 5 performed quite well yielding hypothesized directions on all but three variables. This model utilized the Meyers et al. (2002) measure of welfare reform, which is a cumulative policy variable. As previously stated, these results indicate that the percent female legislators can have a positive effect on the overall welfare environments. This implies that percent female
legislators does matter on a realm of policies (cash assistance, food assistance, disability assistance, tax policy, and unemployment compensation in each state), the cumulative effect of which is better or worse welfare environments. Therefore, even if the level of female legislators does not result in predicted policy outcomes on one of the three sanction policies (work time limits), it does appear to matter on welfare environments. In the end, these policies may matter more to welfare recipients than whether specific sanctions are adopted.

References


Endnotes:
1. The logit and ordered logit models presented were run without measures of state political culture included and the results were strikingly different. Most notable, the coefficient signs for percent female and black legislators were opposite of the directions for the models that included these measures. This is evidence of the affect that political culture plays in the policy adoption in state legislatures.
Social Security: Strengthen Not Dismantle

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Brigham Young University
School of Social Work

Social Security has benefited more than 55 million people. It has lifted about 14 million seniors and 6 million more people out of poverty without adding a penny to the federal budget. Social Security is increasingly becoming an important source of income for many people. Despite the projected shortfall, the program will continue to meet its obligations for the next two decades, and with minor adjustments, it can be on solid footing for the next 75 years. Cutting the benefits or privatizing may not be the best approach. This paper discusses the structure and function of Social Security and what can be done to strengthen the program.

Key words: Social Security, retirement income, old age, income security, social insurance

The Social Security program has been one of the most successful national social insurance programs to date, but it has been highly misunderstood by lay persons as well as politicians and even professionals who study the issue. For more than 77 years, despite economic ups and downs and political turmoil, it has never missed a single payment to eligible recipients. Furthermore, with minor adjustments this program will be able to pay out promised benefits for the next 75 years and beyond (The Board of Trustees, 2012). Social Security is not broken; it is doing what it was designed to do. Yet for several decades opponents have systematically mounted attacks on Social Security in the belief that it is the cornerstone of a welfare state and that when it is dismantled, the rest of the welfare programs will follow (Bandow, 2012; Laursen, 2012; Pollin, 2012).
Over the years critics of Social Security have tried to dismantle the program through strategies of misinformation or exaggerated statements. Recently, Tanner (2011) contended that Social Security is nothing more than a criminal enterprise like a Ponzi scheme since it generates no investments and the current recipients rely on future contributors’ ability to pay. Some have argued that the only reason the program has lasted this long is because workers were forced to pay higher and higher taxes over the years. They also point out that even though there are nominal interest earnings reserved for Social Security, they are generated by a worthless non-negotiable Treasury bond that cannot be sold or redeemed. As such, they believe that the only way to pay the full benefit is to either borrow or increase taxes (Bandow, 2012; Gokhale, 2010; John, 2011). Critics have declared that the system is now plummeting toward insolvency because it is presently paying out more than it brings in (since 2010), and if nothing is done about it, the trust fund will be depleted by 2033 (Bandow, 2012; Tanner 2011). To keep the program solvent for the next 75 years, they project that it will require an additional $15 trillion or more to be financed through the federal budget, further contributing to an already unsustainable national debt burden. For decades, opponents of Social Security have reminded taxpayers that Social Security is broken and will not be there for them (Gokhale, 2010; Tanner, 2012).

Despite their claims, many of the critics’ observations are erroneous. For instance, the critics of Social Security have overstated their case when they say Social Security is insolvent. Supporters point out that, in reality, Social Security has remained solvent not only because of increased taxes, but more importantly because more people have paid into the system than drawn out, creating a surplus. However, the Social Security program does face several challenges that need to be addressed. The Trustees of Social Security (2012) agree that both moderate and long-term financing solutions must be found to put the program on sound footing for the future. This paper discusses the structures and functions of the Social Security program and then considers policy options that are coherent with the current reality.
Social Security: Strengthen not Dismantle

Structure and Function of Social Security

Social Security is Self-Funded

Social Security operates independently from the unified federal budget, with its own dedicated funds, even though it still appears under the unified federal budget for the purpose of accounting. Social Security is not a line-item expense in the federal budget. Unlike other government programs, it is authorized to spend only what income it is able to generate, primarily through payroll taxes and earned interests. The Social Security Administration (SSA) is prohibited from borrowing, thus it cannot deficit spend. When there are any shortfalls in the fund, the benefit is automatically reduced (U.S. Senate, 2010). From the beginning, Social Security has paid out everything it owes from its own resources; it has not borrowed a single penny from the government or anyone else. Hence, Social Security has nothing to do with the current, or any past, budget deficits or long-term federal debts.

Over the life of the program, Social Security has collected $15.5 trillion and spent $12.8 trillion, leaving about $2.7 trillion in the reserve at the end of 2011 (National Academy of Social Insurance, 2012). The current federal budget deficit may have stemmed from tax cuts given to the wealthy, two unfunded wars, the Medicare drug program, high unemployment, the Wall Street bailout and other programs—certainly not from Social Security. Cutting Social Security benefits will not help the budget deficit; it will only hurt recipients who are now just getting by with modest benefits. Whereas, if unwarranted subsidies to special interest groups were cut today, it would lower the budget deficits by a corresponding amount immediately.

Social Security is an Insurance Program

Social Security is more than a pension paid to support the income of retired workers. The program is designed also to insure and protect families. The Social Security program, also known as OASDI, covers survivors of deceased workers (about 6 million), disabled workers and their dependents (11 million), and retired workers and their dependents (38 million). All together about 1 out of 6 people, or 55 million, received some form of Social Security benefits in 2011 (The Board of Trustees, 2012).
Social Security is a relatively comprehensive insurance package that is designed to provide financial security and peace of mind at a relatively reasonable cost. Purchasing private insurance that would cover the full extent of Social Security protection would be cost-prohibitive for average wage earners. If a retired person at age 65 was to purchase a private annuity that paid $1,230/month (2012 SS payout) with a cost-of-living increase, and which paid the widowed spouse for the rest of his or her life, that person would be expected to pay a lump sum of about $430,000 (Thrift Savings Plan, 2012).

Furthermore, a worker at age 30 with children would need to purchase about $450,000 in life insurance and $330,000 in disability insurance to receive the same protection as that provided by Social Security (Nicols, 2008). In all, beneficiaries typically get more from OASDI than they contribute to the system over their lifetime. For example, a one-earner couple earning an average of $43,000 (2011 earnings) will contribute $299,000 into the system, but the lifetime benefit will be $448,000. This is typical of almost all earners except for single male earners and two earner couples who earn on the average of $43,000 each (Steuerle & Rennane, 2011).

Cash Reserve not Critical

Social Security outlay exceeded revenue at the end of 2010 and the costs of the program are projected to exceed income for the next 75 years (John, 2012), but the program is neither insolvent nor was this problem unanticipated. The detractors of the program have incorrectly concluded that the program had finally reached an intractable crisis as Social Security went "cash negative" in 2010. They also claim that funding will continue to deteriorate as baby boomers move into retirement (Bandow, 2012; John, 2012). It is true that a cash imbalance occurred sooner than was originally forecasted, but what is missed by the critics of Social Security is that even if no changes are made, it will continue to pay out full benefits in a timely manner for the next 20 or more years. Social Security has about $2.7 trillion in the reserve, which will continue to grow to about $3.1 trillion by 2021 (The Board of Trustees, 2012).

What is also missed by the critics is that the interest income earned each year from the reserve has helped the growth of the
Social Security: Strengthen not Dismantle

trust fund. This interest income is guaranteed by the full faith and credit of the United States government. Together with payroll taxes and interest income, Social Security will continue to pay out in full until the reserve is finally exhausted in 2033. At that point, Social Security will continue to make payments because the current workers will keep paying into the system. Even if nothing is done today to make the program solvent for the next 75 years, Social Security will still be able to pay out benefits equal to 75% of the full amount by 2033 and at a 73% level by 2086 (The Board of Trustees, 2012). Given the widespread support of this program, it is highly unlikely that no action would be taken to make it solvent.

Operating "cash negative" is not an illegitimate or controversial practice among financial industries. The nation's private pension system, for example, collected slightly less than it needed to pay out, but then used investment income to balance its operating costs (Burtless, 2011). Burtless (2011) notes that between the years 1985 and 2008, the private pension was "cash negative" in 23 out of 24 years, yet it was able to meet all of its obligations on the strength of $4.5 trillion in earned investment income.

From 1937 to 1983, Social Security paid its own way primarily through payroll taxes with a limited reserve. In fact, in the first 47 years of the program, Social Security was "cash negative" for 21 years. Operating "cash negative" is not always an ideal practice, but it is not a hindrance either if there are other dedicated funds, like interest earnings, to meet the obligations. Historically, having a large trust fund for Social Security has been the exception rather than the rule. It was in 1983 that Social Security began building up a large reserve to address the immediate shortfall and to principally pre-fund benefits for the pending retirement of a large number of baby boomers (Burtless, 2011; Michel, Morrissey, & Ballantyne, 2012).

Benefits are Important to Seniors

Social Security benefits are modest but do provide a base income for retired workers. The average retired worker at age 65 receives about $1,230 per month, which does not provide a secure living but, when supplemented with an employer-based pension and personal savings, can maintain a decent
standard of living (The Board of Trustees, 2012). In the climate of economic downturns and ever-decreasing traditional defined-pension plans from employers, Social Security is increasingly becoming an important source of income for seniors.

The Social Security benefit is particularly important to retired low-wage workers for three compelling reasons. First, the program is designed to provide proportionally larger cash benefits to low-income retired workers, even though they contribute less than high-wage earners to Social Security taxes. This progressive redistributive feature has made it possible for retired low-income workers to maintain some degree of independence and dignity. This outcome is commonly measured by comparing a worker's pre-retirement income with the after retirement benefits, or the replacement rate. The Social Security benefit replaces about 55% of pre-retirement income to those who earned on the average $19,400. The rate is about 41% for those with average earnings of $43,000, about 34% for earnings of $68,000, and about 27% for those who earn more than $106,800 (The Board of Trustees, 2012).

Second, Social Security makes up a significant portion of seniors' incomes. Nearly two in three seniors get at least half of their income from Social Security, and one in three relies on Social Security for almost all of their income (SSA, 2012). Third, Social Security is one of the most effective anti-poverty programs for seniors. Ruffing (2012a), by using various 2010 government documents, calculated that Social Security has lifted nearly 14 million seniors out of poverty. Without Social Security, it is estimated that about 44% of seniors would be in poverty (U.S. Senate, 2010). Moreover, Social Security has kept about one million children and more than five million people in the 18-to-64 age group out of poverty. In all, Social Security has lifted about 20 million people out of poverty (Ruffing, 2012a).

While the Social Security program has helped countless people, it should be noted that there is a need for modernization of the program because of the changing demographics in our society. For instance, the program is inadequate in meeting the needs of the more vulnerable populations, such as low-income single workers, caregivers, and people who don't have a long work history for various reasons, or are lifetime low-income workers (United States Senate, 2010).
Analysis of Proposed Options

In 2012, Social Security Trustees (2012) declared that policy-makers should take reasonable approaches to strengthen Social Security so that the program will have sufficient funds for the next 75 years and also to secure greater public confidence in the program. This, along with the mounting national debt, has resulted in a bipartisan call for cutting Social Security benefits to protect the program, even though Social Security is currently good for roughly two more decades and has not contributed to the national deficit in any degree. The most often stated recommendations are raising the retirement age, modifying the cost-of-living adjustment index (COLA), and privatizing the program.

Raising the Retirement Age

Raising the retirement age has already generated economic hardships for seniors. Raising the retirement age from 65 to 66 has amounted to cutting the benefits by roughly 6–7%, and for those who must wait until 67 the loss will be about 13%. For example, by waiting to claim the benefit at 66 instead of 65, one’s real benefit will be $933 (if the base benefit was $1000). The real benefit would be $867 if seniors must wait until 67 to make a claim. Similarly, the penalty for choosing to apply for early benefits at age 62 will be steeper and the bonus received for claiming late benefits will be smaller (Ruffing & Van de Water, 2011). Further, raising the retirement age to 69 or 70 as recommended under the Bowles-Simpson plan would bring even greater economic hardship to seniors (Kingson & Morrissey, 2012; Ruffing, 2012b). Using a baseline of 67 as a retirement age which will phase in shortly, the 69-year-old retiree’s real benefit would be cut by 14%, and 70-year-old retirees would see their real benefits cut by 20% (Ruffing & Van de Water, 2011).

Increasing the retirement age will also escalate income inequality among various income groups, since Social Security benefits will have a differential impact on overall household assets. By using the Federal Reserve Board’s 2007 Survey of Consumer Finances, Rosnick and Baker (2012) show that the lowest wealth quintile of non-homeowner couples in the 35–44 age cohorts in 2012 will lose about 18% of their wealth, while
the top quintile will lose only 8%. These kinds of patterns displayed consistently when each cohort was compared to all other income cohorts. Any delay in Social Security benefits through increase in retirement age will have greater impact on the economic well-being of low to moderate income households, since Social Security income is the largest source of their wealth. Many low to moderate income families do not have pensions or savings, and any assets they may have accumulated over the years have disappeared with housing bubbles and market slides (Rosnick & Baker, 2012).

Ostensibly, proponents for raising the retirement age argue that the increase is warranted, since life expectancy has risen but retirement age has not (Gokhale, 2010). What they don’t say is that overall life expectancy appears to be higher mainly because fewer children die today than 70 years ago. The life expectancy for seniors of earlier decades as compared with today’s is not very different. Any real gains in life expectancy are largely made by high-income workers (6.5 years), whereas low-income workers gained less than two additional years of life expectancy (Rosnick, 2010). Therefore, the retirement age increase from 65 to 67 which is currently phasing in will mostly nullify any life expectancy gains made by low-income workers.

Change the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Index

Changing the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) from Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) to CPI-U, or “chained” CPI, is economically harmful to seniors whose Social Security benefits have already dropped sizably by raising the retirement age. Supporters of this approach argue that the change will more accurately reflect the true cost of living (Reno, Bethell, & Walker, 2011; Reno & Walker, 2011). By changing the index, it is assumed that seniors will minimize the impact of inflation by making a different choice of similar products or purchasing dissimilar products in response to price changes, so that instead of purchasing a name brand toothpaste, they would purchase a no-name brand or choose to purchase food instead of fuel. If this assumption holds, the Chief Actuary of Social Security estimates that it can reduce about .3% in the cost-of-living pay schedule (U.S. Senate, 2010; Veghte, Reno, Bethell, & Walker, 2011).
Thus far, there is no evidence of shifting purchases taking place to hedge against inflation among seniors. Unlike average families who might more easily respond to price changes, seniors with a modest income already have limited purchasing options, as they pay out a bigger share of their income on health care. They not only spend two to three times more for health care now, but the price of health care is expected to continue to grow faster than other consumer products and services. Medicare Part B, for instance, grew more than 15 fold from $7.20 in 1976 to $115 in 2011, and it is not expect to level off anytime soon (Veghte et al., 2011).

If the switch from CPI-W to chained CPI takes place, it can be expected that all seniors will lose benefits immediately even though it is a modest .3% in the first year. However, it will be about 3% after 10 years, 6% after 20 years, and after 30 years, seniors would lose about 9%. Social Security income is a particularly large portion of total income for older seniors and any cut could decrease their standard of living substantially. The traditional COLA index adopted in 1972 to calculate Social Security benefits may have been an important factor in keeping seniors from falling into poverty and other economic hardships (Baker & Rosnick, 2011).

Privatize Social Security

A full or partial privatization of Social Security was a flawed idea in 2005 and it is still a poor idea today. The proponents of privatization argue that workers would have more money in their retirement accounts if they put their money in the stock market rather than in the Social Security system. Tanner (2012) notes that real long-term investment in stocks has yielded almost a 7% return rate, so that if the hypothetical middle income earners had invested half of their payroll taxes in a private investment beginning in 1968, they would have received $2,067 each month from investment income in 2011 instead of the $1,338 Social Security payment. Low-income earners who did the same would receive $1,096 investment income instead of $891 from Social Security.

While private investment appears to be advantageous, this approach has two major concerns. One, the return on the private investment is often overstated. Krugman (2005) claims that when certain factors are taken into account (such as when
the market corrects itself, investment is diversified for safety, management fees are taken out, and the like), the real return rate might be about 2.7% rather than 7%—not much different than what one might get from the Social Security Treasury bill. Empirical evidence from the Chilean study seems to support Krugman's claim. Though Chile is a small economy compared to the United States, its experience shows that individual accounts invested in the market had little or no economic advantage over those who stayed in the traditional Social Security system. While individual accounts provided more economic benefit for mostly affluent workers, Social Security was a better option for low-income workers (Cerda, 2008; Dattalo, 2007; Laursen, 2012).

Two, having choices and a higher return on the investment is desirable, but it usually comes with higher risks and many uncertainties. Some may benefit from this arrangement, especially the fund managers and brokers, but the real risk is that many seniors may lose. Seniors must understand that the market is volatile and past market performance is no guarantee that it will continue to perform at the same rate. The market meltdown of 2008-2009 is instructive to all. A mistake made in the market can lead to economic devastation for seniors. Stiglitz (2005) believes that people who lack a proficient knowledge in the nuances of markets and financial instruments are vulnerable to making mistakes. The problem is compounded if they are misinformed or deceived. They then become susceptible to exploitation and may eventually end up losing assets they have already accumulated. Investing in the market is inherently risky. Any failed private investment account or severe stock market downturn would inevitably pull the government into bailing out liabilities created from such events as was the case in Great Britain. Stiglitz (2005) quips that if the stock market was safe and always would yield a promised high return, the federal debt could be wiped out in a few years by the government investing in the indexed stock exchange. Thus far, no one has advocated such a plan.
### Table 1. Policy Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Income as % of Taxable Pay Role</th>
<th>% of Decrease in Shortfall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raise Revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase worker/employer tax by 1.1%</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase worker/employer tax by 1% in 2022 and by additional 1% in 2052</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase worker/employer tax by 1/20% annually over 20 years</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance collection of existing taxes</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broaden the Revenue Base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate the cap (do not count additional earnings)</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate the cap (count the earnings toward benefit)</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate the cap (count the earnings toward benefit but use different formula)</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradually restore the cap to cover 90% of earnings for workers and eliminate cap for employers</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradually restore the cap to cover 90% of earnings</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extend coverage to newly hired non-covered state and local government workers</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat all salary reduction plans as income [e.g., 401(k)]</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from U. S. Senate Committee on Aging (2010).
Strengthening Social Security

There are several workable options to strengthen Social Security. Turning the program into a private enterprise, reducing benefits through raising the retirement age, or switching the COLA index would not be the best approaches. There are other promising options. Raising revenue and broadening the revenue base are more reasonable policy options for strengthening the Social Security program without hurting those who rely on the program the most. Table 1 presents several notable options identified by the Special Committee on Aging of the United States Senate in 2010.

Raise Revenue

The unfunded obligation of $8.6 trillion over the next 75 years can be resolved with several variations of revenue increase or in combination with other options (The Board of Trustees, 2012; U.S. Senate, 2010). For instance, as seen in Table 1, increasing worker and employer payroll contributions by 1.1% alone would be more than sufficient to take care of the entire shortfall for the next 75 years. Despite the clear-cut nature of this approach, in the current political environment any lump sum tax increase may not be acceptable. Therefore, to avoid any political opposition, it may be more agreeable to increase the tax rate at 1/20th of one percent for the next twenty years beginning in 2015. This would raise contributions by $26.50 per year, or about 50 cents a week for average workers, and would cover the shortfall by 69% (U.S. Senate, 2010). Adjustments to make Social Security more viable are nothing new. Throughout the life of the program, timely tax increases have been put in place to meet the benefit obligations. Since the last tax increase took place in 1990, a small adjustment now would not be unreasonable (Baker & Rosnick, 2011; Reno & Walker, 2012).

Broadening Revenue Base

Table 1 also shows that there are several ways the Social Security revenue base can be expanded to address the long-term financial shortfall. Though each has several positive features, one of the most fair and effective ways to settle the long-term shortfall is to rework the cap on taxable earnings, which is set at $110,100 (The Board of Trustees, 2012). While there are several variations, gradually setting the cap to tax 90% of all
earnings will decrease the shortfall by about 28%. This would be sufficient to take care of any shortfall when combined with the incremental tax increase (1/20 of one percent) already suggested and/or other options identified in Table 1 (U.S. Senate, 2010).

In 1977 Congress authorized Social Security to broaden its revenue base by taxing 90% of all wages and providing for a cap to rise with inflation. Currently about 85% of all earnings are taxed instead of 90% because most of the income increase went to the top 6% of earners (Reich, 2011). In other words, most of the income increase went to those who were earning more than the $110,100 cap; as a consequence, any income above the cap is not taxed. If the 90% taxing level is set now, the cap would be at about $180,000 (Reich, 2011). The proposed plan would fully phase in over about 40 years, naturally with a different cap amount. Under the proposed plan, there would be no change for 94% of the people who are earning under the new cap (U.S. Senate, 2010). Raising the ceiling to generate additional revenue is a logical response to the concentration of wealth at the top. This approach is consistent with the intent of the Congress and is reasonably workable. Parenthetically, if a different option were chosen, such as eliminating the cap all together and not increasing the benefits on those additional contributions, it could be more than enough to make the program solvent for the next 75 years and beyond, but it may not be politically expedient. It is plain that adopting any of the available options or a combination of options found in Table 1 would effectively mend any long-term shortfalls found in Social Security.

Conclusion

For nearly 78 years the Social Security program has paid out its financial obligations to seniors and qualified families with full fidelity in a timely manner within their budget structure. Therefore, unlike many federal programs, Social Security has not contributed to federal deficits or debts. In fact, over the years the federal government has used Social Security surplus funds to balance the budget, pay down debts, finance various federal programs, and to generally keep the other taxes low (Bergmann, 2005). After having benefited from the Social Security assets, the government should not blame Social
Security nor should it turn its back on the promise it made to pay back what it has borrowed from social security surplus funds. The government could come up with the revenue as needed either by levying additional taxes or cutting other programs. It is true that the program will face a sizable shortfall as the program moves into the next 75 years, but Social Security is neither broken nor in crisis. Social Security can be on solid footing for many years by making a few modest changes.

References


While there was a slightly lower rate of out-of-wedlock births in 2009, 41 percent of all births were to unmarried women. Although there has been an increase across the board among older age groups, Black women continue to have children out of wedlock at a disproportionately higher rate than White and Asian women. This is of particular interest, considering African-American women are increasingly attaining higher levels of education in comparison to previous generations of African-American women. As such, the perceptions of childbirth, child-rearing, and marriage among a sample of African-American women matriculating within a postsecondary setting are explored.

Key words: Intersectionality theory, single African-American mothers, marriage, childbirth, African-American family

Some white, middle-class, college-educated women argued that motherhood was a serious obstacle to women’s liberation.... Had black women voiced their
views on motherhood, it would not have been named a serious obstacle to our freedom as women. Black women would not have said motherhood prevented us from entering the world of paid work because we have always worked.... Historically, black women have identified work in the context of family as humanizing labor, work that affirms their identity as women, as human beings showing love and care, the very gestures of humanity that white supremacist ideology claimed black people were incapable of expressing. (hooks, 2000, p. 133)

Statistics released by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in recent years suggest that an increase in educational attainment among women has not resulted in a sustained decrease in out-of-wedlock births among women of all races and ethnicities (2010). Between 2002 and 2006, there was a noticeable decrease in out-of-wedlock births among all racial and ethnic groups. However, data collected during 2007 and 2008 demonstrated a sharp increase in out-of-wedlock births among women of all racial and ethnic groups, despite historical trending data that indicate increased levels of education among women (CDC, 2010). While there was a slightly lower rate of out-of-wedlock births in 2009, 41 percent of all births were to unmarried women (CDC, 2011). Although there has been an increase across the board among older age groups, Black women, along with Hispanic and American Indian women, continue to have children out of wedlock at a disproportionately higher rate than White and Asian women (CDC, 2011).

This is of particular interest considering African-American women are increasingly attaining higher levels of education in comparison to previous generations of African-American women. Still, despite attaining higher levels of education, African-American women continue to have higher levels of out-of-wedlock births in comparison to women of other racial and ethnic groups. For this reason, this exploratory analysis seeks to examine the perceptions of childbirth, marriage, and post-partum career pursuits among a sample of undergraduate African-American women matriculating to enter the professional workforce. These perceptions may reveal factors and
perspectives that potentially contribute to the continuing disparities in out-of-wedlock childbirths among educated African-American women. In addition, study participants were asked their opinions regarding society’s and their respective families’ views of respondents’ likelihood to wed, have children, and participate in the workforce. The investigators aimed to discern potentially relevant patterns reflecting the perceptions of marriage, childbirth, and post-childbirth careers among the selected sample within a socio-historical context.

Literature Review

Recent figures released by the Center for Disease Control show the number of children born to unwed mothers climbed to 1.7 million nationwide in 2009 (CDC, 2011). This number is unprecedented, as it is the first time in history that four out of 10 births were to unwed mothers (CDC, 2011). In the past, the majority of births to unwed mothers were to teenagers, but recent analyses have determined that less than one-fourth of women who gave birth to children out of wedlock were teenagers (CDC, 2011). The remaining proportion of children born to unwed mothers was born to women aged 20 and over (CDC, 2011).

Statistics demonstrate that, during 2002-2006, there was a 12 percent increase in the number of babies born to unwed African-American women and a nine percent increase in the number of babies born to unwed Whites (CDC, 2009). Although there was a slight decline in fertility rates among all racial and ethnic groups in 2009, statistics show that the rate at which Black women gave birth to children out of wedlock during this period remained higher than any other racial or ethnic group (CDC, 2011).

The rate at which African-American women are obtaining higher levels of education is also increasing. In 2006, African-Americans earned more than 140,000 Bachelor’s degrees, illustrating a greater than 100 percent increase in the number of Bachelor’s degrees earned by African-Americans in the year 1990 ("Number of Blacks," 2008). Moreover, more than half of the 140,000 Bachelor’s degrees were earned by African-American women ("Number of Blacks," 2008). Similar findings were presented by the American Council on Education
which recently reported that women account for 63 percent of all African-American undergraduates (2010). Trends in the attainment of graduate and professional degrees among African-Americans remained the same with women earning more than 70 percent and 63 percent of the aforementioned degrees respectively ("Number of Blacks," 2008). More recent statistics reveal that, in 2009, African-American women continued to account for more than 70 percent of African-Americans enrolled in graduate programs, while White women accounted for close to 60 percent of Whites enrolled in graduate programs ("Gender Gap," 2012). Previously released statistics illustrate that 67.5 percent of African-American women and 57.8 percent of White women were in pursuit of graduate degrees at the beginning of the decade ("Gender Gap," 2012). Thus, both groups are pursuing graduate degrees at higher rates, with African-American women demonstrating even greater rate increases and overall graduate program enrollments.

Higher levels of education typically facilitate higher levels of health literacy and greater access to resources (Kiefer, 2001; Pappas, Hadden, Kozak, & Fisher, 1997; Schillinger, Grumbach, & Piette, 2002). Accordingly, one would assume that an increase in educational attainment would result in a decrease in out-of-wedlock births, as a college educated person would have the knowledge of and ability to access available resources to prevent unintended pregnancies.

It should be noted that as African-American women attain post-graduate degrees, they are less likely to have children out-of-wedlock (National Vital Statistics System, 2007). Still, among those women who are college educated, African-American women with Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees accounted for 23 percent and 24 percent of out-of-wedlock births respectively (National Vital Statistics System, 2007). Again looking at African-American women with undergraduate and graduate degrees specifically, those in the 25 to 29 and 30 to 34 age groups accounted for a sizable portion of out-of-wedlock births among college educated African-American women. The CDC attributes the overall increase in out-of-wedlock births across racial and ethnic groups to a range of causes, including the increase of non-marital cohabitation, the wait to get married at older ages, and contraceptive effectiveness, among other things (CDC, 2009).
The rate at which African-American women conceive, deliver, and rear children out-of-wedlock has been intensely studied for the last three to four decades. In particular, past or early studies of out-of-wedlock births among African-American women have been conducted in a manner that has resulted in depicting many in the African-American or Black community as being deviant, uneducated, irresponsible, and/or sexually "free" (Roebuck & McGee, 1977; Staples, 1974). The most notable and oft-cited study, the Moynihan Report, painted the African-American community as being one replete with absent fathers and dominant mothers ("The Negro Family," 1965). This illustration had far reaching and long-lasting impacts on the images of Black motherhood.

Recent and older analyses have also examined the role of the family structure in which African-American adolescent females grow and develop on their perceptions of out-of-wedlock births (Garrison, 2007; Hill, Yeung, & Duncan, 2001; Roebuck & McGee, 1977). Moreover, several studies and analyses have probed whether having a legal spouse within the home is a significant determinant of conception and childbirth among African-American women (Garrison, 2007; Haney, Michielutte, Cochrane, & Vincent, 1975; Loomis & Landale, 1994; Manning, 2001; Wax, 2007). With the exception of Garrison (2007), the aforementioned studies provided minimal insight into the roles that larger historically-driven structural forces have played in shaping the perceptions of out-of-wedlock births among women within the African-American community. While the above referenced studies expanded understanding on the role of family structure and its impact on shaping individuals' perceptions of premarital sex and definitions of illegitimacy, they were done outside of the context of the socio-historical forces that have significantly impacted the Black family.

A few scholars in particular have looked at the African-American family within the context of past and present realities, driven by the political economy (Patterson, 1998). The most significant factor for many African-Americans is the legacy of slavery. It is widely documented that the economic system of slavery prevented the legal formation of family among enslaved Blacks via a range of practices, including the restriction of marriage between the enslaved, the auctioning
off and selling of fathers and children, and the ban on marriage between Black women and the White fathers of their children (Hill, 2006; Martinot, 2007). When enslaved African women were permitted to keep their children, they were often left to raise them alone or within a communal setting with other enslaved mothers, as a result of the above practices and/or restrictions (Garrison, 2007; Hill, 2006).

Raising children within a communal setting has seemingly continued, as it is not uncommon for single African-American women to build networks to help in raising their children (Jarrett, Jefferson, & Kelly, 2010; Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008; Randolph, 1995). Often times, in addition to the fathers of their children and family members, these networks consist of other single African-American mothers who work cooperatively to help one another with day care, the exchange of material resources, and emotional support (Hill-Collins, 2000; Jarrett et al., 2010; Nobles, 1974; Randolph, 1995; Stack, 1974). As such, practices surrounding child-rearing that began during slavery have sustained their existence.

The continued existence of kin networks and communal child-rearing have been a necessity due to slavery’s byproduct—racial discrimination. The political economy has historically placed racial and ethnic minorities, and more specifically, African-Americans, in a place of disadvantage (Cohn & Fossett, 1996; Couch & Fairlie, 2010; Dickerson, 2007; Dozier, 2010; Quillian, 2003, Turner, 2010; Wilson, 1996). Due to systemic pay disparities experienced by Black men, Black women were forced into the paid labor market (Coleman, 2003; Juhn & Potter, 2006; Landry & Jendrek, 1978; Quillian, 2003; Wilson, 1996). Simply stated, before the feminist movement of the 1950’s that advocated for a woman’s right to work outside of the home, African-American women were already fulfilling integral labor roles inside and outside of the home (Landry & Jendrek, 1978; Painter & Shafer, 2011).

As a result, African-American women have long had to balance the demands of their work inside and outside of the household. Because of this now longstanding tradition, one could contend that African-American women, both married and single, firmly believe that childbirth, and subsequently raising a family, by no means excludes the pursuit of a career.
In comparison to African-American women in previous generations, African-American women in current generations are pursuing professional careers at a greater rate (Kaba, 2008; "Number of Blacks," 2008). Thus, for professionally accomplished, single women who are financially able to support a child on their own, marriage may be obsolete. Choosing to have a child alone may also simply be a matter of a lack of a suitable spouse. Studies conducted with African-American female college students found that they wished to marry someone who is more successful professionally (Ganong, Coleman, Thompson, & Goodwin-Watkins, 1996). Statistics cited previously demonstrate that the ratio between college-educated African-American females and males can make meeting this goal quite difficult. Therefore, it is possible that some African-American women currently obtaining post-secondary degrees may likely decide to forego marriage and have children out-of-wedlock while still pursuing their respective career goals. Conversely, other African-American woman may experience unintended or out-of-wedlock births while waiting for their ideal mate or husband.

Theoretical Framework

While feminist theory has traditionally been applied to effectively examine the historical experiences of White women, it struggled to provide a comprehensive analytical lens through which the experiences of African-American women could be explored or even understood (Crenshaw, 2000; hooks, 2000). Thus, it is imperative that the personal and professional experiences of African-American women be examined via a theoretical framework that accurately takes into account what it has meant, and and what it continues to mean, to simultaneously belong to marginalized racial and gender groups.

Intersectionality theory asserts that social constructs cannot be examined as separate oppressive forces. Instead, social constructs such as race, gender, class, and age must be acknowledged and examined as reciprocating and overlapping systems of power that serve to create a continuum of oppression. Accordingly, the extent of oppression experienced by individuals is determined by their location within the social
hierarchy designed by the aforementioned intersecting and coinciding forces (Hill-Collins, 2000). Pointedly, the degree to which one experiences oppression within the power structure created by the intersecting systems of domination and marginalization is dependent upon their race, gender, and class (Hill-Collins, 2000; hooks, 2000). Such oppression often manifests in one's personal and professional lives.

The intersection of race and gender is a precarious one that continues to have an indelible impact on the lived experiences of African-American women, in particular. Historically, African-American women have often found themselves at the bottom of the social hierarchy due to the cumulative effects of racism and sexism (Crenshaw, 2000; hooks, 2000). Thus, the vastly different historical experiences of White and African-American women within the United States has greatly influenced the perceptions, and resulting practices, of both populations in the context of family formation and their participation in the paid workforce.

As detailed in Hill-Collins' *Black Feminist Thought* (2000), African-American, female domestic workers of the 1950's made concerted efforts to send their daughters to college to propel them into professional careers and prevent them from becoming members of the working class. As a result of this, African-American women obtained college degrees in large numbers during subsequent decades. However, African-American males were disproportionately, and thus noticeably, absent from college campuses, leaving many African-American women without potential marriage partners (Hill-Collins, 2000). As a result, many African-American women have chosen to forego beginning a family or have opted to begin one alone.

**Methods**

Data used in the present analysis were collected through a multi-national survey project initiated by Japan's Okayama Prefectural University in 2008. The survey, entitled The Life Course Survey, was administered in nine countries, including the United States.
Sample

Utilizing a convenience sampling method, data were obtained from students attending post-secondary institutions leading to a Bachelor's degree within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. All respondents had to be undergraduate students currently matriculating at the survey institution. Of the 426 respondents who participated in the survey within the United States' segment of the survey, 37 self-identified as African-American females. Each of the 37 African-American females included in the final sample indicated that they were not married at the time of the survey.

Survey Instrument

Lead investigators from each of the nine countries provided input and guidance into the development of the survey instrument. The self-administered, paper and pencil instrument contained a range of statements designed to gain information regarding perceptions of future plans for marriage, childbearing/child-rearing and workforce participation. In addition, their perceptions of societal and familial expectations of them in respect to the above topics were also explored as part of the survey. After reading statements regarding future marital, childbearing, and workforce participation, respondents were asked to mark whether they: (1) absolutely had no plans; (2) really do not expect to; (3) somewhat expect to; or (4) very much expect to pursue them in the future. Subsequent to collecting completed questionnaires, data were manually entered into an SPSS database for analysis.

It should be noted that the questionnaire in the United States incorporated additional items in order to collect demographic information pertaining to race and academic classification, in particular.

Statistical Analysis

For the present analysis, data were examined using SPSS version 19. Analyses conducted included frequencies and percentages to demonstrate differences in respondents' perceptions of various topics. Similarly, frequencies and percentages were employed to demonstrate differences and
similarities among the views of respondents, respondents' perceived views of their parents and family members, respondents' perceived views of friends, and respondents' perceived views of society in regards to childbirth, marriage, and careers.

**Study Limitations**

The present analysis utilizes a relatively small sample. The use of a small sample prevents the accurate implementation of causal or correlational analyses due to large margins of error. Moreover, a sample size such as that used in this analysis prevents the generalization of results (Elifson, Runyon, & Haber, 1998). As such, the results generated in the present analysis may be used strictly to determine the potential for conducting a future, larger study.

**Findings**

**Marriage**

Of the 37 respondents, 33 (89%) said they plan to get married at some point in the future. Only four of the survey respondents (11%) indicated they did not have a plan to marry at any point in the future. Twenty-two respondents (60%) replied that it would be neither difficult nor easy to get married, with ten respondents (27%) perceiving it would be difficult to get married. Interestingly, while they appeared fairly optimistic about the ease of getting married, they were not so clear on their opportunities for marriage. Fourteen respondents (38%) thought marriage opportunities would be neither difficult nor easy compared to almost 12 respondents (32%) who thought it would be difficult. However, a smaller number respondents, 11 (30%), thought marriage opportunities would be easy to find.

When looking at the perceived expectations of parents, siblings/relatives, friends, and society, the respondents mostly indicated that it was somewhat or very much expected of them to get married. Results indicated that 21 respondents (57%) thought it was very much expected of them to get married by their parents as compared to only 13 respondents (35%) who indicated that it is very much expected of them by society. None of the respondents perceived their parents had no expectations of them getting married, compared to seven respondents
who did not think society expected them to be married.

Examining how personal desire aligned with perceived expectations related to marriage, 35 respondents (94%) who indicated that they want to get married perceive that it is expected of them by their parents. Similarly, close to 33 respondents (88%) perceived that marriage was expected of them by their relatives, while 30 (81%) indicated that is expected of them by their friends. However, a lesser number of respondents thought it was expected of them by society. Approximately 29 respondents (77%) replied that it is their belief that society expects them to get married.

Similar to those who planned to get married, all of the respondents who indicated they did not want to get married thought it was expected of them by their parents. When it came to the expectations of their family regarding marriage, the respondents who did not want to get married were evenly split between perceiving their family did not expect them to get married and wanting them to get married. The respondents were asked two questions related to their views of marriage as it relates to their parents and friends. Of those who did not want to marry in the future, one-half responded that the question was not applicable, while the other half responded they did not envy couples such as their parents. Conversely, nine (25%) of those who wanted to get married indicated the question was not applicable. The remaining 28 respondents (75%) were evenly split regarding feeling any envy of relationships such as those of their parents.

Children

It is important to note that according to the data, at least one respondent had a child at the time of the survey. Additionally, only 34 survey respondents completed the survey question regarding future plans for children. Hence, of those who responded to the question, 33 (97%) indicated they wanted to have children in the future. Only one respondent (3%) replied that they do not want children at all.

When asked about the ease of having and raising children, 16 survey participants (43%) perceived that it would neither be difficult nor easy to have and raise children. Seventeen respondents (46%) replied that having and raising children would be
difficult for them. Only four respondents (11%) thought that having and raising children would be easy.

When looking at the perceived expectations of their parents, siblings/relatives, friends, and society, the respondents mostly indicated it was *somewhat* or *very much* expected of them to have children. Nineteen respondents thought both their parents and society very much expected them to have children. None of the respondents perceived that their parents or society had no expectation of them to have children. Only three respondents (8%) stated that it was their perception that their siblings/relatives did not expect them to have children, and only one responded (3%) that her friends did not expect her to have children.

When looking at those who want to have children in particular, 33 indicated (88%) it was expected of them by their parents. Thirty-one (84%) also perceived this was expected of them by other members of their family. All of the respondents perceived it was expected of them by society to have children, regardless of their personal desire to have children.

**Career**

Twenty-eight of the respondents (76%) indicated that working for the rest of their lives fit into the plan for their lives, as compared to nine respondents (24%) who stated they would only work if they had to. An overwhelming majority (98%) responded that working was expected of them by their parents, family, and friends. In fact, none thought it was not expected of them by these groups. Likewise, when asked about society’s expectations, 34 participants (92%) replied that it was their perception that society expects them to work. Only three survey participants (8%) indicated society has no expectation of them working.

**Overall Perceptions**

Close to 30 respondents (80%) indicated they often hear that marriage, birth, and child-rearing are difficult from people around them and the media. Despite this, almost 36 respondents (97%) want to get married and have children. Looking at the total perceptions of marriage, children and work, results indicate that 25 of those surveyed (67%) believe they would get
married and have children and continue working for the rest of their life. Eight respondents (22%) answered that they will get married, have children and discontinue working once they get married or when their children are born.

Discussion and Conclusion

In summary, as indicated in the preceding section, most of the respondents indicated that they would like to get married at some point subsequent to the completion of their undergraduate studies. Although more than half of the respondents did not foresee any difficulty getting married, only a minority of survey participants indicated that opportunities for marriage would be easy. This may explain why four of the respondents indicated that they see no plans for marriage at all in the future. Still, only one respondent replied that she has no intentions of having children at any point subsequent to graduation. Simply put, a larger proportion of participants indicated that they plan to have children than get married at some point in the future. The perceptions of survey respondents in regards to marriage and children may reflect the increasingly growing acceptance of out-of-wedlock births within society. Recent findings released by the Pew Research Center have revealed that out-of-wedlock births among younger persons, regardless of race or ethnicity, have become a cultural ubiquity (Fry & Cohn, 2011). Reasons for the growing acceptance of out-of-wedlock births across the racial and ethnic spectrum often vary. While many women may experience unplanned pregnancies, others may decide to forego what was once the traditional route and have a child as a single parent.

The vast majority of respondents also indicated that it was the expectation of their parents, other relatives, and friends that they get married. However, a smaller number of survey participants responded that they believe society shares the same expectation. Conversely, all of the respondents noted that they believe society and their parents expect them to have children. Thus, while it was the perception of respondents that their respective friends and families expect them to get married at some point, it was also their belief that society in general has a lesser expectation of them in terms of marriage. Nevertheless,
survey respondents unanimously responded that it was their perception overall that society and their parents expect for them to have children at some point. That survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated that it was their perception that they are expected to have children to a greater extent than to get married may suggest a few reciprocating and intersecting factors related to race and gender.

As detailed earlier, a range of socio-historical and structural factors have likely impacted the overall perception of those within society. One of the least forgettable is the institution of slavery which forced enslaved African women to produce offspring for the expansion of slavery and the profitability of the slave owners. For over three centuries, enslaved African women were physically violated to ensure the continuous supply of free labor (Calomiris & Pritchett, 2009). In order to substantiate their actions, slave owners described enslaved African women as innately licentious, making slave owners vulnerable to their alleged seductive powers and less responsible for their behaviors (Harris-Perry, 2011; Muliawan & Kleiner, 2001).

Although slavery was legally abolished almost 150 years ago, the stereotypical depiction of African-American women as impious and wanton continues to plague the conscience of mainstream American society, and thus continues to be the lens through which African-American women are generally viewed. In terms of reproductive behaviors and mothering in particular, African-American women have frequently and openly been portrayed as conceiving children out-of-wedlock simply to obtain monetary resources provided by government entities (Harris-Perry, 2011; Williams, 2003). Learning to resist such stereotypes and portrayals has become part of the lived experience for many African-American women (Hill-Collins, 2000; James, 2010). Nonetheless, African-American women remain acutely aware of such stereotypes existing within the larger society.

This was revealed in a qualitative study of adolescent African-American girls ranging in ages from 15-21. In trying to gain greater insight into the participants' perceived importance of gendered racism within American society, it was deduced that the intersecting realities of race and gender had a greater impact than race or gender as separate forces. In
particular, focus group participants shared that they were very much aware of the stereotypes associated with Black women from a very young age (Thomas, Hacker, & Hoxha, 2011). For this reason, like the focus group participants, participants within the present survey may also possess an acute awareness of the ongoing stereotypes of African-American women. Thus, their overwhelming indication that it is their perception that society expects them to have children more frequently than it expects them to get married may be a reflection of such stereotypes.

As noted previously, African-American mothers have raised, and continue to raise, their children with the assistance of other relatives, including grandmothers and fictive kin (Jarrett et al., 2010; Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008; Randolph, 1995). The cooperation of grandmothers, aunts, fictive kin, sisters, friends, and others in the raising of children continues to be an instrumental cultural asset among single African-American mothers (Hill-Collins, 2000; Jarrett et al., 2010; Nobles, 1974; Randolph, 1995; Stack, 1974). It is this particular cultural asset that has made it possible for many African-American single mothers to start a family outside of the legal institution of marriage while continuing to pursue their professional endeavors. For this reason, many of those respondents who indicated that they expected to have children more so than marry may have experienced or witnessed the common and effective raising of children outside of legal marriage with the support of communal networks.

Survey results also revealed that the majority of respondents plan to return to work should they ever have children. These findings may reflect a trend that has maintained its momentum for the last two to three decades—women returning to the workforce shortly after childbirth (Mather, 2012). Although there was a time when it was expected of women to remain home to raise children and manage the home, this is no longer the case. Beginning in the late 1980s, increasingly more women have returned to the paid workforce once their maternity leave ends (Juhn & Potter, 2006; Klerman & Leibowitz, 1994). However, this has long been the reality for African-American women. Due to the historically dismal economic realities facing African-American families, African-American women have often had to engage in the paid labor force in order to
help ends meet (Juhn & Potter, 2006). Plainly phrased, African-American women rarely had the luxury of staying home to focus solely on their domestic responsibilities (hooks, 2000). Instead, African-American women often had to shoulder the burdens of fiscal responsibilities while meeting the needs of their respective families (Ferell Fouquier, 2011; Juhn & Potter, 2006; Quillian, 2003).

Yet again, one cannot discount the effects of slavery on the American psyche. For three centuries, just like enslaved males, enslaved African women were required to endure hours of labor. Moreover, enslaved African women were required to do such within the worst of inhumane conditions (Muliawan & Kleiner, 2001). The labor of African-American women under extreme circumstances almost from the time of their initial arrival in this country perpetuated the perception of them by the larger American society as less than human or superhuman even, and therefore, incapable of experiencing a range of human emotions, including exhaustion, anxiety, and/or the desire to nurture a child or family (Muliawan & Kleiner, 2001; Pyke, 2010). Consequently, African-American women have traditionally been expected to continue working shortly after childbirth.

Likewise, once slavery ended, African-American women were often employed as domestic workers, regularly working long hours under less than dignified circumstances (Ferell Fouquier, 2011). As noted by hooks, "from slavery to the present day, black women in the U.S. have worked outside the home, in the fields, in the factories, in the laundries, in the homes of others" (2000, p. 133). Consequently, many African-American women have traditionally returned to work shortly after childbirth in order to help support their respective families. Thus, African-American women’s dual labor inside of and outside of the home has been a long-standing practice. That African-American women are increasingly obtaining post-secondary degrees also contributes to their likelihood of pursuing work or professional careers outside of the home while simultaneously raising a family. The expressed desire to get married as well as have children by survey respondents may be a reflection of middle class values often associated with those who obtain post-secondary education. However, as noted previously, the lack of suitable partners may leave many professional African
American women to go it alone in terms of raising a family; this reflects an enigmatic juxtaposition of middle class ideals and the collective, historical experience of African-American women in the United States.

The present study provided a glimpse of the perceptions of a sample of African-American female college students regarding marriage, childbirth, and careers. Taking into consideration the previously outlined findings, future research should focus on probing the perceptions of marriage, childbirth, and careers in larger samples of African-American women attending post-secondary institutions.

References


Beyond Professional Emergencies: Patterns of Mistakes in Social Work and Their Implications for Remediation

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This paper analyzes the emerging field of government mandated child protection, the work's design, and the public crisis caused by public airing of its mistakes. The cycle of reacting to public revulsion at errors, followed by a return to "business as usual" persists despite official, government inquiries and the social work profession identified with the protection of children. The risk of working in a highly emotional area is discussed through the sociology of "mistakes at work," or professional emergencies. This work balances risks with advantages of evoking emotions. The risk comes from the negative emotions associated with official failures seen by the public as tragic mistakes or worse. In the past four decades social work has become vulnerable to public outcries when a child is killed when supposedly protected. The management of that risk is relatively new to the profession and it has not responded effectively. The sources of child fatalities within the child welfare system are at least partly due to the design of the system, its daily work routines and the central role of the profession in the emerging field of child protection. These routines are described with an analysis of how they contribute to failures. Recommendations for system change are suggested.

Key words: Child protection; child welfare; emotion; mistakes at work; professional emergencies; professionals; social services; social work

"[I]n occupations of high competence such as the professions, we can hypothesize that mistakes and situations of potential error bear a close relationship to the beliefs and organization of work," Donald W. Light, Jr. (1972, p. 821)

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The History of a Problem

Light studied the disconfirmation of a professional’s core competence through a single error, which he called a “professional emergency” (1972) after Hughes (1951). The disconfirmation that follows a string of such errors becomes a crisis for the profession. This paper addresses the crisis in social work from failures in child protection. I use the sociology of mistakes at work by examining the “beliefs and organization of work” that I find contribute to and even cause these consistent errors (Bosk, 2003; Bosk, Dixon-Woods, Goeschel, & Pronovost, 2009). These causes are hidden from view in work routines that persist, despite changes in policy and procedures.

Child protection is not new, although protective action defined as work by employed professionals certainly is. This paper focuses on the problem that social workers have encountered since they took on the public mandate of protecting children in the late 20th century. This transfer of responsibility for protecting children from the parents and community to a public entity was crystallized by the identification of the battered child syndrome in 1962 (Daro, 2009; Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegenmueller, & Silver, 1962). This “discovery of child abuse” led to state laws permitting parents to be reported to government authorities for maltreatment in the 1960s (Nelson, 1984; Pfohl, 1977). By 1974 the federal government was involved in the U.S. by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, and in Britain through the reaction to the tragic death of a child, Maria Caldwell, also in this time frame (Corby, 2003).

Since the provision of federal money in the U.S. for amelioration of child abuse and neglect (CAN), offices of child protection have come to serve the intake function for child welfare systems, making it difficult to obtain funds for family services without a finding of CAN (Cameron, 1988). Besharov and Brown argue that the claims to protect children were just a way to gain political support for family services in the U.S., “No one’s interested in child welfare. That’s why CPS [Child Protective Services] has become the smokescreen for building the child welfare system” (1987, p. 21).

The same process appears to have occurred in Britain, where Munro and Calder find, “the focus on investigating
child abuse allegations had become so dominant ... making it hard for families with needs that were unrelated to abuse to get help” (2005, p. 439).

There are consequences, both organizational and professional, when social workers serving families become defined as protectors of the family’s children. In the emergence of modern child protection, social workers have become culpable for any harm to the child in a family receiving their services. As stated by Munro:

   Prior to the 1970s, this uncertainty about which children were in danger and in need of state protection was accepted as a problematic feature of child care work and there was no public outcry holding professionals to account when parents killed a child. (2011a, p. 20)

   Today the outcry is unmistakable. Rather than single errors, children are left in harmful hands and are repeatedly battered, and the cumulative effect is great.

   The Sun’s petition demanding justice for Baby P rocketed past a MILLION signatures... A record 1,146,000 share our outrage and back our crusade for those who failed the tortured tot to be fired... The Sun today delivers its million-plus petition for Baby P's social workers to be sacked: The PEOPLE have spoken. (Barlow, 2008, P25)

   Newspapers also have migrated from outcries about a child’s death to gathering statistics on multiple social work errors, as shown in this headline: “Failed by the system: 25 abused children die under the noses of social workers” (Harris, 2011). The result is a crisis for the profession itself, according to this source: “Child protection work facing recruitment crisis... Many social workers quit their jobs following vilification in [the] media and attracting new entrants has become harder” (Butler, 2011).

   This paper examines the problematic nature of social work after this long term, secular change in how the work has been organized under media and public scrutiny. The “public outcry” holding social workers to account has become a defining problem for the profession. “Media scrutiny” is a major feature of this problem over the past 40 years (Ayre, 2001) and
itself has been subject to scholarly examination for its effect on an agency (Cooper, 2005), on agencies in general (Chenot, 2011), on legislation (Douglas, 2009, 2012; Stanley, 2004), and on the relationships among politicians, media and the profession (Chenot, 2011; Corby, 2003; Parton, 2004). Some have concluded that social workers face an impossible task in protecting children (Littlechild, 2008), or that, at the least, “mistakes” are inherent in this new work. According to Munro (1996, p. 793), “In child protection work, it is every social worker’s nightmare to make a mistake that contributes to the death of a child. But some mistakes are inevitable because of the complexity of the work and our level of knowledge.”

Mistakenly taking a child away from its family is condemned, while leaving a child in the home to be maltreated is also condemned, so that the social worker is “damned if you do, and damned if you don’t” (Munro, 2011a, p. 20), or caught “between a rock and a hard place” (Littlechild, 2008, p. 663). As stated by Munro and Calder:

Mistakes are either ‘false positives’ or ‘false negatives.’ ...Neither type of error is wholly acceptable but neither type is wholly avoidable. Moreover, if we try to reduce one type of error, given the same level of professional skill, we shall increase the other type. (2005, p. 441)

The Professional Definition of the Problem

From this perspective, the profession is subject to swings from overreacting to CAN by unnecessarily removing children, back to preserving families while risking tragic death, in a “vicious cycle” (Chenot, 2011). After the death of a child, frontline workers respond by removing large numbers of children, called “foster care panic,” only to revert to “business as usual” when the furor dies down (Chenot, 2011, p. 169). Professionals respond with “fear and anxiety” for “not assessing, and eliminating, risk, as the government and their employing agencies expect them to do” (Littlechild, 2008, p. 663). Managers respond to media attacks with constraints on workers which interfere with the work, in a “vicious circle” (Cooper, 2005). The implications are enormous, if this negative perspective is accurate. For, regardless of a professional’s best efforts, there
are "unavoidable mistakes in child protection work" (Munro, 1996), and "mistakes" can be fatal.

In this view, increasing protection for children at risk cannot be accomplished without pulling families apart in an overreaction or state of panic. Outside political forces are reactive and counterproductive, pushing the profession towards punitive actions towards families (Chenot, 2011; Littlechild, 2008). Worst of all, there is no solution possible when this perspective is adopted, other than a never ending demand for more social workers, more resources for families, more training, more skills and more supervision (Child Welfare League of America, 2005; Daro, 2009; Day, 2011; Lord Laming, 2009; Munro & Calder, 2005; Parton, 2004). Among their other demands, the National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths (NCECAD) places a dollar value on the resources needed—three to five billion dollars a year to reduce case loads of child protection workers (NCECAD, 2013).

The Social History of the Social Work Profession’s Identity

The social work profession is self-defined as a "normative profession," driven by values such as equality and social justice and by claims to be a "helping profession." While laudable, this stance also has the consequence of creating professional vulnerability to wishful thinking and dependence on face validity for much of its research. Social work textbooks tell stories that serve the mythology of the rise of a helping profession in the protection of abused children, such as the oft-told Mary Ellen case (Watkins, 1990). The conclusion that families must be served instead of protecting children by their removal is not an either–or decision in the value system of the profession, but rather the culmination of a fabled rise of the social worker as a paid professional from nineteenth century reformers and "child savers." In that rise from the volunteers in protective societies and the laws that permitted child removal on various grounds, the narrative was that family preservation was a hard–earned truth learned from an overreaction of taking thousands of children from their homes (O’Connor, 2001). In checking this narrative, Ross studied the records of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC),
which was founded as the original protective society out of the Mary Ellen Case (1980). Although the NYSPCC was specifically founded for the sole purpose of preventing cruelty to children (Costin, Karger, & Stoesz, 1996, p. 66), Ross found that of the 932 reported cases of children which were investigated or removed from 1875 to 1884, there were 137 children alleged to have been abused, or less than fifteen percent (1980, p. 74).

Similarly, when Gordon examined the case files of the NYSPCC's rival which advocated family preservation, she found little actual work done to achieve that lofty goal (1988, p. 72). As discussed here, it is necessary to draw conclusions from the process of how the work is actually done, not from laws, policies, procedures and claims about what was supposed to have been done. There is too great a discrepancy between work in the abstract and routine work. This is the sociology of work, or in the case of professional emergencies, mistakes at work.

The social work profession grew from claims to "scientific charity." Historical trends and shifting societal values have alternated between child saving and family preservation. Here I inquire whether this paradigm is adequate and how it squares with the actual front-line work of child protection.

The Sociology of Mistakes at Work

An alternative view of work mistakes is found in the sociology of work (Bosk, 2003; Hughes, 1951; Light, 1972). Here the focus is not on the analysis of mistakes, but careful observation of the work itself, how it is done, how decisions are made, and how work routines are followed. Hughes distinguishes between mistakes that come from the routine carrying out of the work and mistakes from a new, unexpected form of work for which the routines are unprepared. The event of an error creates an emergency. Workplace errors have been found, on observation, to be endemic—a constant, everyday occurrence—so that the occupation responds, not to reduce or eliminate errors, but to accept them as part of the day-to-day routine (Riemer, 1976). When they are brought to the attention of outsiders, the workers cover them up, deny their existence and maintain the public posture that such errors are rare and if they become obvious, will be dealt with internally through "self-policing" (Bosk, 2003; Riemer 1976). Hughes found
medical errors were "buried" in a complex division of labor that made it difficult to establish just where the mistakes had been made. One result of this approach is a "structured silence" among physicians in the face of an emergency (Freidson, 1975).

In short, errors at work are a normal feature of work, defined by the social construction of the work process. Errors in protecting children require a close examination of the nature of the everyday work of child protection, not rationalizations that workers are "damned if they do, and damned if they don't."

This paper seeks to break Chenot's vicious cycle. The sheer quantity of raw data about individual cases of child deaths and the decisions leading up to each one is striking. As a former insider of the child protection system, I also have knowledge of many such cases that remain confidential. As a Child Protection Investigator (CPI), I had years of experience in making the decisions involved in protecting children. Inside knowledge is necessary to understand mistakes at work that come from "the beliefs and organization of the work" (Light, 1972). I concur with Littlechild; outsiders to the actual work of child protection are poorly placed to understand it, and up to now, they have not been adequately informed:

A vital element...is knowledge and consideration of how social workers perceive their world of work and their professional agency within it. Yet this has not been a feature of any statements or assessment of risk in relation to child protection work in any of the government publications. (Littlechild, 2008, p. 671)

An Overview of Child Protection Frontline Work

No account of the construction of the social problem of child abuse would be complete without comparing the 300 or so cases of child battering found by the physician founders of the CAN movement to almost three million cases reported to authorities each year and investigated by the CPS (Bartholet, 1999; Children's Bureau, 2012; Waldfogel, 1988). Waldfogel had access to almost 200 confidential case files, so she was able to gain insight into CPI daily work. She noted that attempts to group and classify those cases were fruitless, for they
represented too many sources of variation to be divided into neat categories. The same characteristics of the work are obvious to front-line workers (Johnson, 2013; Parent, 1996). In contrast, the physicians were able to classify child battering into medical categories of bone fractures, burns, internal injuries, poisoning, wounds and the like. Their classification system became the basis for CPI investigations over the following decades and is still used today (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services [IDCFS], 2012). But, as Waldfogel found, the nature of the cases being investigated had dramatically diversified from the physical harms of child battering. So, part of the problem is that the legal basis and allegation system for investigating CAN has not been changed since the first findings of the battered child syndrome in 1962, despite the fact that the medical model has transitioned from the scene, having been replaced by a psychological model of child abuse (Costin et al., 1996). Policy-oriented scholars watch the shifting laws, policies, and objectives of the system without realizing that the frontline work does not always change along with the policies and laws. This results in official and scholarly inquiries failing to provide a realistic assessment of the problems.

An analysis of the data reported by one state (Illinois) gives insight into the general nature of this work. The large majority of child harms reported consist of neglect, not abuse. Physical abuse is only 30 percent of the total (data recalculated in the Tables in IDCFS, 2012). Of that subtotal, most abuse allegations (63 percent) are no longer cases of harm to a child, but "risk of harm." Investigating risk is not looking for what happened to the child, but rather at "risk factors" of what might happen in the future. The CPI looks away from the child to focus on the adults in order to find family dysfunction that could be resolved by social services. This redirection of the investigative work turns child protection on its head, shifting focus away from the detective work of finding the cause of injury to the child to the social work of diagnosing the needs of adults. Investigations of neglect do much the same thing, documenting the child's circumstances and family functioning, not the child's physical state. As for child neglect, the most frequent allegation is "lack of supervision," as the child being left alone or with a caretaker who is not considered responsible. Like "risk of harm," "lack of supervision" does not focus on harm,
but rather on some potential harm that could happen in the future.

The entirety of the medical conditions classified by the discoverers of the battered child syndrome constitute less than five percent of the Illinois physical abuse cases and little more than one percent of the total. The result is that the chances of a CPI investigating an actual battered child case would be about one in a hundred investigations, and for many CPIs, years may pass before confronting such a serious allegation. Child fatalities from physical abuse are exceedingly rare, and are found in only 60 investigations out of 127,414 reports (IDCFS, 2012, Table 11). In short, for almost all of the work conducted by CPIs, routine “normal” family cases are processed, and the variety of the “incoming” cases is enough to strain any investigator. As in the jobs of medical screeners or work in airport security, there is a “low prevalence effect,” which is a persistent source of errors when rare cases (such as a gun in the luggage processed by an airport screener) are missed (Wolfe et al., 2007). As Besharov and Brown noted in 1987, “only a small proportion of reported cases involve serious danger to children” (p. 19). All these cases require attention, and when a case of battering is mixed in with the routine family cases, it is likely to be overlooked and/or its seriousness to be misidentified. As a result of this, Besharov and Brown note that:

[We must] have special rules for children who have been seriously injured. We can have rules that say that no child will be returned to any parent who has seriously injured a child until we are very sure that parents can adequately or safely care for the child. (Besharov & Brown, 1987, p. 19)

Besharov and Brown recognize the difference between normal work routines and work that has no normal routine with which to respond, as noted by Hughes. But “special rules” are not the only solution; we need “special everything.” from the orientation of the front-line workers to all their routines, including forms, procedures and laws that guide their work. Waldfogel, one of the few who examined raw case files in her study of CPS, recognized this also:
The statistics show that the system does not always intervene aggressively enough in very high risk cases. The Boston sample [of almost 200 cases] includes several cases of serious abuse or neglect involving families previously known to DSS. ... Clearly, the existing system is unable reliably to prevent repeated abuse or neglect even when cases have been referred to it. (1998, p. 27)

Administrative Causes of Child Protection Errors

In 1999 the Illinois DCFS administration took the Priority One cases (all of the serious medical allegations of battering) away from the front-line CPIs. They were then assigned to a single team. While this action created a division of labor within child protection, it removed almost all front-line workers from the experience of dealing with severe child abuse allegations. This action was based on the belief that serious risk is diagnosed at the front end of the reporting process through the medical categories of battering. The CPS was assumed to have no need to investigate serious child risk when none was referenced in initial reporting. The consequences of this decision magnify the problem of the non-routine risk, or low prevalence effect. This type of managerial thinking fails to take into consideration the nature of the work and hidden threats to children with minor presenting problems, since it fails to include the knowledge of frontline workers.

What is even more troubling is that the investigation of child abuse can be legally constrained to the study of the actual allegation, so that uncovering a worse problem in the course of an investigation does not automatically trigger more thorough work. What the investigation may potentially find is already discounted in this system, due to the assumption that the information available to the original reporter is sufficient to guide an investigation. That is, the administration assumes that the initial sorting of cases for intake is being done by the public reporters of child maltreatment, and the investigative work is merely taking place to confirm the initial suspicions of the public. Thus, when a mother admits she left her child alone, all the information required to assess the allegation of neglect has been officially obtained and the investigation is required to be closed. No work to assess further risk to the child
can officially be done, which is dangerous.

The point here is that the workers dealing with children's harms are not oriented to recognize the dangers the child might be experiencing, thanks to the work itself and how it is organized. Almost all cases workers experience are at a low level of risk, and the same thinking that works well in such cases will have catastrophic consequences when applied to a rarely encountered case of serious child harm and danger. This is especially so for harms not recognized by the reporter or classified as minor when the report is received and an investigation authorized.

Although the politics of child protection work is to claim that children are being protected from serious harms, internally those harms are experienced on the front lines as minimal, as well as discounted in every way in daily work routines. In fact, most cases may involve no harm at all, only a suspicion of risk. As predicted by the literature on mistakes at work, overlooking severe risk and even harm to children is a product of how the work and workers performing it is organized and structured.

The Child Protection Intake for Social Services

In most cases reported for CAN, there is little "credible evidence" that the child is at risk; seventy-eight percent of reports nationally are unsubstantiated (Children's Bureau, 2012, Exhibit S-1). But administratively, child protection work justifies provision of family services, for after an allegation against a family has been substantiated regarding child maltreatment, the family becomes eligible for social services (Besharov & Brown, 1987). Studies have found "that staff deliberately inflated initial scores of cases in order to increase the eligibility of families for services" (Gillingham & Humphreys, 2010, p. 2599). This is the tip of the child protection/family services iceberg. Unrecognized in the statistics of child maltreatment are the cases where an official finding of CAN is applied merely to provide services. These are administrative findings of CAN, where no harm or even risk has been found on investigation. While Besharov (1987) and Besharov and Brown (1987) concluded that minor cases drove families into child welfare services, they didn't realize that many were fictitious.
I personally created such figments while a CPI. In one, a mother herself called the child abuse hotline to report that she was overwhelmed and afraid she would unintentionally hurt her children. The call was duly assigned as "risk of harm." I found the woman needed help, but was no danger to her children. But, in order to obtain help for her, I signed the papers certifying that her children were at risk of child abuse.

More common were cases of homeless mothers with children. They would live in a homeless shelter until their 90 days ran out, then they would be forced to leave. The shelter staff would make a report of neglect, and I would duly fill out forms stating that the children were suffering from inadequate shelter, in advance of the experience of inadequate shelter. The case substantiation would lead to a payment for the security deposit for an apartment, the rent to be paid thereafter from public aid.

Borderline administrative reports have also been common, especially from the schools, the most frequent source of reports (IDCFS, 2012). Teachers are alert to problems with their pupils, such as a child sleeping in class or showing inadequate hygiene. Once the teacher is alerted, any bruise or scratch will become the trigger for a CAN report. I soon learned to distinguish between the presenting problem and the real reason for a report. Medical authorities would do the same, often merely to have the child’s home situation checked to help in the diagnosis.

The lack of a direct relation between the statistics and child harm is a secret deeply hidden within state welfare systems. There is little motivation for anyone affiliated with such systems to acknowledge that tangible harms are not always the reason money is being spent, so the secret remains secure. This manner of managing social services through a system of CAN allegations and family investigations is fundamentally flawed. The front-line workers are systematically oriented to experience their work as providing services to families, not providing protection to children at risk. One consequence of this faulty system design is that it has submerged the mandate of child protection within the child welfare system.

This is a generally unaddressed change in how child protection front-line work has been done over the last four decades. It has become harder for the social work profession to claim it
works though client voluntary acceptance of social services. The CWS’ services now rest on the CPS threat of removing the child.

One question posed by child protection failures is how well the profession has adapted to this public recognition of its authority and control over clients, in contrast to the professional ideology of providing voluntary, beneficial services. While gaining greater control over clients, the profession has accepted a costly risk that horrifying failures to protect children will be laid at the profession’s doorstep. Yet, the risk has been accepted in every state in the USA and in other countries as well. For despite its dissimilarity to the public image of the profession, taking on such power and control over clients has helped increase the size and resources available to the profession. One way this seizing of power is done is through the official investigations of social work failures. The answer to a tragic case of child injury or fatality from the profession is more social work: more training for the front-line workers (in social work); more degrees (in social work); and even accreditation of the policies and procedures of the CPS and CWS (by the social work profession). In Illinois, the child protective system was accredited by the National Association of Social Workers after a years-long infusion of social work principles, including sending all supervisors, at state expense, to obtain their MSW degrees at local colleges and universities. Social work professors and consultants conducted weeks-long training for all front-line employees. I myself was “retrained” at the master’s level at state expense.

The claim that social work is a beneficial, “helping profession” is increasingly discredited the more the profession is held responsible when there is a catastrophic failure. These failures and the emotional charge associated with them are something new to a helping profession. The professional image of voluntary assistance and advice must be accommodated to reflect new, legal liability as the de jure parent. While outside forces create pressures to unite families more quickly or disassemble them more rapidly, the profession does not fundamentally change. While core values must be preserved, it is not clear that they are being protected by rigidity. The profession’s resistance to change contributes to the findings that new laws and social policy changes have little effect on the work or its
outcomes. This failure to adapt is risky for a profession subject to intense emotional reactions by the public when work goes wrong, and a mystery to governments that introduce various reforms without any effect. (This sentence is really confusing. What are you trying to say here?)

The Two-Edged Sword of Public Revulsion

What is yet to be noted in the social work literature is the parallelism between the emotions invoked by the claims makers advocating for child abuse laws from their cases of children battered and killed, and the emotions evoked by social work failures when children under supervision are battered and killed (Johnson, 2013). The profession that has benefited most from the stirring up of emotions about child maltreatment is now exposed to those same emotions, turned against it, for its apparent failings. The profession has apparently made a devil’s bargain of accepting a frightening risk of exposure in order to gain control over clients and more work for its professionals. The highly publicized child abuse horrors that were mobilized by the claims makers were useful for the profession initially, but they became a threat. The social work response has been to keep all records and files confidential (New York State Temporary Commission of Investigation, 1996). But errors, particularly fatalities, may be impossible to hide.

In Illinois, as in other states, the records have been stored under a law that requires unsubstantiated cases against a family to be expunged within 90 days if nothing was done for child protection. If later a child is injured or killed and the case is brought up in the media, the spokesperson of the system will duly report that “There is no record of the Department being involved with this family.” Of course there is no record, because it was expunged as soon as possible.

What Child Protection Errors Reveal

I do not have to refer to a litany of horrific cases of child fatalities, for my experience as a street-level bureaucrat gives me direct experience of errors, usually not leading to a child’s death. In one case assigned to me, I began by reading the history in the files of the social service provider, files normally
not available to me. I read that the mother and her partner got into a knife fight in front of the children, and the man's eye was put out. The fight was duly reported in the file of the caseworker servicing the family, as one of a series of violent episodes in front of the children. Each child was severely injured at one time or another, and the police took custody in each case, only to have the children returned home by the caseworker defending the family to the police and child protection investigators. Because CPS investigations are treated as merely the admissions system for CWS social services, front-line investigators defer their judgment to the social workers on the case, one of the main (unstated) reasons that children whose families are repeatedly investigated for abuse continue to stay in their battering homes.

The case was repeatedly investigated because outsiders saw the harm to the children, while the social worker never made a report of risk. Yet, there were repeated notes documenting violent incidents she made in her case file. She took no independent action on any of these violent incidents, even though she was obviously aware of them. No supervisor responded to this situation, although the case was supposed to have been monitored continuously. Since no child died, there was no media report nor awareness until a judge reviewed the case of the eldest child, who was so disturbed that he had seriously injured his little sister. The judge wondered what services had gone on in this case and asked my division of child protection to look into it.

I was charged with investigating my coworker. She had left the case and I spoke with her replacement, who immediately took action. His first question to the woman was, "Do you want these children?" She responded, "No." The children were then removed and finally referred for adoption. It is hard to imagine anyone in this family being served by the social services being offered, other than the caseworker herself, who kept busy to justify her job.

The systematic avoidance of addressing harm to a child in a family receiving social services has become a routine cause of news headlines and government inquiries. The social work profession prefers to treat these horrifying events as if they were isolated, rather than systematic events. Just as in my experience, the publicized cases show service providers
ignoring the child being injured before their eyes (Curry, 2007; Lord Laming, 2009). This has led to pressure to reduce the statistics on reinjury. In one study, 40 percent of families where CAN was substantiated consisted of cases previously substantiated in earlier investigations (Gillingham, 2006, p. 86). Similarly, 30 to 50 percent of child fatalities are estimated to happen in families which have been reported before (Besharov, 1987).

In Illinois the administration adopted a goal of reducing their statistic of reinjuries. The pressure to reduce reinjury reports fell mainly on the caseworkers providing services, and the only practical way to do this was to stop making any reports of harm themselves, as all of their service cases were families where risk had already been substantiated. At each step of the process, from hotline call personnel to investigators, there was pressure to drop repeat cases without investigations. This is another managerial failure to understand the consequences of a policy implementation or changes in the work process. These managerial design flaws result in front-line workers who are systematically oriented away from perceiving child protection as a priority in their work.

The Inherent Conflicts of Interest in Child Protection Work

When the professional giving the help is also the person evaluating it, a conflict of interest emerges in full force. Who is being helped, the client or the professional? The problem is greater than the ill-founded crusade of a well intentioned outsider. The social work profession has become an insider to central social institutions, providing social services to families through CWS offices and being mandated to protect the children of those families being served. Inherent in these two contrary mandates is a conflict of interest. The policy decision to unite the office mandated to protect children with the office mandated to provide social services to their parents is responsible for many failures in protecting children.

The primary conflict of interest in our social service systems is self-evaluation. The professional who provides the services then testifies to their success. In the courts where decisions are made on how safe it is to return a child to a troubled
family, the decisions rest on the testimony of service providers such as trainers, counselors, therapists, and caseworkers. If the family members have cooperated with the court-mandated services, then they have completed the court requirements to have their children returned. There is no mechanism, other than the professionals' admission of failure, to evaluate the impact of services and the fitness of the parents. Here the motive is self-validation of one's own professional competence. Helping professionals become completely convinced that they have aided an unfit parent, for their intentions were all to the good. They look upon uncertain results and perceive certainty therein.

Another conflict of interest is in the decision to supply social services to a troubled family. Needless to say, the more troubled the family (a "multi-problem family"), the more services are found to be needed. If, on the other hand, a child's mistreatment is judged sufficient to remove that child from the home permanently and provide for her adoption, no social services will be needed, and the profession of social work loses work.

Finally, if the profession that is responsible for the protection of the child is also the one that is serving the family, then the adults' needs will become primary. In fact, services are rarely given to the child, but rather to the adults in the maltreating family. Social service professionals are oriented to see the adults as the clients, not the children. This point of view was made clear early on, as the new field of CPS became tightly linked with CWS, as described in the interesting book *Helping the Battered Child and his Family* (Kempe & Helfer, 1972):

> Simply the desire to help or the feeling of compassion for battered children is not enough... The focus is on the parents and not the children. Our premise is that if the parents are all right, the children will be protected. (p. 45, italics in original)

Other authors reported similar styles of thinking on the situation. "The interviewer must, at all costs, resist the desire to find out who actually hurt the child. This approach is much too threatening and unrewarding." (Schneider, Pollock, & Helfer, 1972, p. 55).
The second "belief" in the IDCFS training follows this same line of thinking:

Families engaged around the issue of their child's safety and with recognition of their strengths are more likely to cooperate with following interventions than families confronted with accusations of the perpetuation of maltreatment against their children. (Child Welfare Institute, 1997, p. 2)

These statements are clear indicators of goal displacement and the denial of child harm. The goal of protecting children in the CPS has been set aside for a different goal of serving the adults in the CWS. The belief that if battering adults are in process of being reformed, their children are protected is patently false, as case after tragic case of catastrophic failure attest. Furthermore, the very basis of child protection is to determine "who actually hurt the child." Avoiding that responsibility because it will interfere with the battering parents' acceptance of social services is a disservice to the injured child and to the public. The child has the obvious needs in these situations, but the social work tool kit of services is filled with services for adults. So their needs become paramount, while the child's are displaced, as is shown in the following statement: "From the onset the response must be to the parents' needs. Although the family comes to our attention usually because of the child, it is the parents on whom we must focus our attention" (Alexander, 1972, p. 23).

Indeed, the literature that arose with the discovery of the battered child syndrome revealed quite clearly the dilemma facing the CPS within the CWS:

When stories of child abuse are published, the reflex response of the general public is to demand punishment for the parent and removal of the child. Descriptions of injuries inflicted on a child evoke a sense of horror, fury and the feeling that no punishment can be too great... ...[T]here is little interest in, or support for, helping the parent become a better parent. (Polier & McDonald, 1972, p. 210)
So, from the first, the social worker has been oriented to ignore and avoid the negative emotions evoked by cases of child mistreatment as a “reflex response” and instead focus on the needs of adults for support. By seeing the family in a favorable light, not only is the family more likely to accept social services, the providers are more likely to view the family as salvageable and ignore the risk to the child in the process. When the child is being harmed in front of the social worker, the textbook advice to “manage’ any bitter, shocked or incredulous feelings about parents who hurt their children” can have horrendous consequences (Curry, 2007, p. 74). In the DeShaney case, in which an incident of tragic harm to a child was carried to the U.S. Supreme Court, one justice commented that the social worker’s notes had “an eerie, emotionally detached quality given the horrendous nature of the events she was relating in them” (Curry, 2007, p. 74). Meanwhile, the social work literature promotes the view that social services are the routine answer to children being harmed.

The more that direct services intervene into children’s distress and provide direct assistance to parents, ... the more the children’s welfare will be promoted and the ultimate goal of child safety and healing for parents as well as children can be achieved. (Ferguson, 2004, p. 205)

In social work with children and youth, and particularly in the field of child protection, ... it has been shown repeatedly that the best means of reducing the incidence of child maltreatment is to provide generous and appropriate support for families. (Jackson & Coram, Research Unit, 2004-2005)

Once again, the needs of children are conflated with the needs of adults, to the point that the latter supplant the former. These statements also conflate the needs of troubled adults for social services with the needs of the service providers for clients. “Generous” social services for harmful parents also means plentiful work for social work professionals. The provision of social services to the adults is based on a new definition of such people as needy themselves and holds that they are presenting their needs to the providers through the harming of
their children. So, harm to a child is reinterpreted as a demand for adult services.

**Child Protection by Proxy**

Thus, if a child is injured, protection can be achieved by placating the parents through services. But that may be found to be awkward. Suppose the battering parent is not available or cooperative. Then the services can be supplied to another family member! Faith in the success of services is boundless.

It is a fascinating question ... why ... the focus of treatment, and indeed of diagnosis, has been upon the mother, ... but it is not surprising. ... The mother was more readily available to a social worker ... while the father was at work ... Moreover, the philosophy of protective services for the past fifty years has been geared to the ... mother ... even though the father might be the primary abuser. (Kempe, 1976, p. xi)

While Kempe looked forward to an improved philosophy of protective services, such philosophies are difficult to change, especially when ingrained into work habits and routines.

**Hypotheses about Social Work Failures**

I have a working hypothesis about the root cause for child protection failures, along with various details of the front-line work and managerial decisions that direct it away from protecting children. While the casual observer sees that a child is being systematically harmed in a home and reacts with horror, the professional social worker is trained to see that more services are needed in that troubled family, and avoids facing the maltreatment while serving the needy adults. It becomes "professional" to deny emotions in order to deal with difficult clients. When the social worker is mandated to both provide social services to the family and to protect the child, a conflict of interest is created. Systematic errors of leaving a child in a harmful environment will result, for the service provider is trained to see the service needs not the need of child removal.

The training of which I speak is not restricted to the schools of social work or the retraining received by staff; it is designed
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into the very system of child protection. The checklists and evaluation forms of the child protection investigator’s daily workload focus the worker’s attention on a series of family needs, described under a rubric of “risk assessments” for the child (see Gelles, 1996, pp. 70-72). There is a direct translation of such “risks” at the intake end of the process (child protection) into “services” to address each risk at the processing end (child welfare). So, any lack of cooperation with the system staff and/or unwillingness to accept services become risk factors that supposedly endanger the child, when they really endanger the caseworker’s work. This disconnect is one step in a programmed distraction of the worker from facing the needs of the child to focusing on system needs through evaluating the family’s adults. Each step of the process of investigation of child maltreatment is designed to lead to direct services to adults.

Forms, case notes and other paperwork also distract the worker from the child’s needs by focusing on evaluating the adults, assessing their needs, and planning for their services. The shift of attention from the child to the needs of adults is designed into the CPS work routines as part of a consistent, pervasive organizational culture. This is the professional culture of social work, which emphasizes services to families, not child protection. In fact, in the Encyclopedia of Social Work, the article on “Child Protection” only mentions services to families in order to protect children, without a word on the removal of threatened children to safety (Edwards & Hopps, 1995). This organizational and professional culture is so strong that all evidence will be interpreted to support the conclusion that the professional response to child harm is to provide services. If the child is harmed in a family which is receiving services, then more problems have been exposed and more services are needed.

Evidence that this hypothesis is correct is available in the cases of child fatalities available in the media and government inquiries. We find that the deaths of children in families receiving services are preceded by public knowledge that the child is being severely injured, but that knowledge is rejected by the service providers. Far from the profession’s defense that the deaths are unforeseeable and onetime occurrences, they are sometimes the culmination of a months- or years-long series
of harms apparent to everyone but the service workers. In the case of Eli Creekmore, the grandmother repeatedly called the authorities about severe injuries, as did the child’s teacher and doctor, but they were ignored. The waitress in the restaurant where the boy was taken for his birthday party broke down in tears when interviewed for the PBS documentary on the case, when she recalled the little boy who could not eat his ice cream because his mouth was filled with blood (KCTS-TV, 1988). Matthew, a child whose troubled mother was receiving social services even before he was born, was investigated 60 times for maltreatment during his almost six years of life. He was under investigation from birth until death and serviced by 21 different social workers and their supervisors. This posed a mystery to those conducting the inquiry of the case, who found that “Many social workers were confused about their role and did not treat the safety and well-being of the child as paramount, giving priority to family unity instead” (Gove Inquiry, 1995, Conclusions).

In contrast to the conclusion of the Inquiry that more social work training was needed, I conclude that the social workers were following their training all too well, and the training was the cause of the problem. The alternative conclusion, that 21 successive social workers all were severely undertrained, strains credibility.

How to Manage Services to Children and Families

The resolution to the apparent dilemma between services to protect children and services to aid families is, simply, triage. We accomplish it by evaluating families based on their known risk to the child, and classify the case into one of three categories. First, we have the cases that are too risky to let stand, and too costly to try to correct. These are the cases for child removal and assignment to adoption services. Second, we have the cases where serious risk is found, and the families require assistance to remain whole. These are the cases for social services. Third, we have the families with problems which are not serious enough to warrant services, nor likely to cause serious child harm, so they can be left alone, or referred to volunteer social agencies or other resources, such as their extended family.
Patterns of Mistakes in Social Work Practice

Triage works to adjust the classification decisions to the resources available. If resources are plentiful, then more cases can be included in the second category to receive services. When resources diminish, then more families will have to be placed in the first classification and their children removed permanently. This is not a call for foster homes, but for adoption. The funding authorities will have to face the decisions about how far the system goes to break up families, and how much to try to preserve them, taking much of the pressure off the social workers for this decision, once it is rationalized. I maintain that the persistent complaint among the apologists for social work errors, that workers are "damned when they do and damned when they don't" remove a child is not representative of the real problems of decisions and choice that the system faces. That argument becomes a form of special pleading for more jobs and more resources, rather than adapting to and managing the available resources to maximize both services to families and child protection.

Now I turn to the management of the child protection and family services systems. While triage seems to be a rational response to the child protection problem, instead we have constant demands for more resources. The families that are most harmful to their children are often those supplied with the most services, draining the system of resources needed for less troubled but salvageable families. There are several reasons for this contrary state of affairs. It begins with the decision to not supply families with social services until some finding of abuse or neglect has been made. This orients workers to link services with risk to children, and respond to risk within a serviced family with more services instead of permanent child removal. Administratively, it is easier to manage several workers serving the same family than workers spread among many. The same logic applies to long term services for a family compared with assessing and providing short term services. Workers work together and establish long term relationships among their colleagues and with family and community members such as the schools, medical staff and the police that require more work when many families located apart are being served.

Short term services to stabilize a family may be an efficient use of resources, but these cause management problems and are less attractive to workers. The families become dependent on
services, and so they must continue or the family will relapse. In parallel, the workers, supervisors and managers become dependent on business as usual, reinforcing work routines and decision making that make the workload manageable.

As one example from my former work, child protection staff were given a standard number of cases to investigate in a month, regardless of their seriousness. If the investigator decided that a full investigation was not necessary, she was decreasing her own work load. The contrary decision meant that the investigator was working harder than usual. If the case appeared to call for removal and an appearance in court, even aside from the full investigation required, the paperwork was extreme, including 28 different forms, some of them, like the interview form, filled out multiple times. In one month I was scheduled for 20 court appearances, appearing to testify almost every work day. This required full investigations and screenings for each case, as well as the usual assignment of investigations. There was no reduction of my or any other investigator’s workload to account for the different demands of the work. Thus, when I became an acting supervisor (without authority), members of my work team simply refused to take any case that appeared to require additional work. Clearly, only the most conscientious and dedicated worker, a nonconformist like myself, or one faced with an unavoidable “heater case” (our term for a family case drawing negative publicity) would make the effort to do the necessary work. As Hagedorn (1995) found, in another state, only the naïve new hire could be trusted with a serious case. New workers would soon “burn out,” while the veterans would sit in the cafeteria, drinking coffee and fill out forms without having done complete investigations, or any investigations at all. While the work situation in my workplace had not deteriorated to this extent, I could discern the tendencies in all of us.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Many child protection failures result from a conflict of interest designed into the work. Rather than adopting a system of triage, the child welfare system defines the problem as requiring family services, delivered in proportion to the harm. Systematic distortions of the work result. Child protection workers investigate service needs and service providers are
distracted from harm to the child by serving adults.

By being self defined as a helping profession, social work operates within a professional and organizational culture of self-validation, generating evidence of professional success. Negative emotions and negative outcomes are ruled out as non-professional. By looking the other way when a family receiving social services harms a child, case workers risk a tragedy. They also risk creating the same negative emotions that supported the entry of the profession into the field of child protection originally. The profession is partially protected from its errors by forbidding access to case records as “confidential” and by systematically destroying them. But when a child is killed, the exposure of systematic errors brings about a public outcry. The inquiries which follow seem to be patterned to tamp down the outcry by being dispassionate and looking for reforms in the communication and management of official rules, procedures and laws. The language of rational management is invoked to smooth over the details, to suggest that polishing up the rules and laws will solve the problem.

A systematic redesign of the CPS and CWS, as well as their linkage, will be required to resolve the problem. The day-to-day front-line work needs to be redesigned, so child protection is not treated as a distraction from the central objective of diagnosing family needs for social services. Perhaps the only way to accomplish this major organizational change in values and behavior is to remove the social work professionals entirely from the management of both child protection and child welfare. Then the inherent conflicts of interest would be mitigated.

References

Patterns of Mistakes in Social Work Practice


Women's Work Attitudes, Aspirations, and Workforce Participation Before and After Relocation from Public Housing

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For the past decade or so, public housing policies have focused on moving residents from concentrated housing developments into newly designed mixed-income developments or, through housing choice vouchers, into neighborhoods with lower concentrations of poor. These newer programs are driven by research that suggests public housing residents will have greater opportunity for financial self-sufficiency and, although not openly discussed, will better appreciate the importance of work when they live among higher income working residents. Using panel data collected from public housing residents relocated following the closure of a public housing development, this study explores the relationship between individual characteristics, neighborhood characteristics, and work attitudes, aspirations, and actions. The findings reveal that public housing residents are no different from the non-poor in their attitudes about work, but that when residents move into high income neighborhoods, their dreams of satisfying careers become more solid.

Key words: public housing, neighborhood, employment, work attitudes, women

Since the Supreme Court ruling in Hills v. Gautreaux (1976) and the resulting consent decree from the U.S. District court in Gautreaux v. Landrieu (1981) ordering the Chicago Housing Authority to desegregate its public housing developments, model public housing in the United States has changed from concentrated developments into either integrated mixed-income developments or scattered-site housing through...
vouchers. The Gautreaux case, although directly relevant only to the Chicago Housing Authority, lead the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop similar programs to deconcentrate poverty, most notably the Moving to Opportunity program for relocating residents into suburban areas and the HOPE VI program grants for dismantling decaying developments and reconstructing mixed-income sites.

These relocation programs were driven largely by a belief in the "geography of opportunity" (Galster & Killen, 1995). That is, the notion that the opportunity for self-sufficiency differs depending on the neighborhood inhabited. Established working- and middle-class neighborhoods should offer residents more chances for employment, education, and networking than deteriorating inner-city neighborhoods. Relocating public housing residents into better neighborhoods—the theory contends—will improve their and their children's life chances, not only because they will enter and stay in the workforce but also because the value of work prevalent in middle-class neighborhoods will provide role models for them and their children.

Employment and Relocation

Several studies over the past decade have explored whether able-bodied residents are more likely to enter, and stay, in the workplace when they are relocated out of public housing developments. Levy and Kaye (2004) found in their assessment of households relocated through Hope VI programs that the majority of working-age residents still lived in poverty after relocation and the rate of employment had changed little over the course of the two-year study. While 31 percent of Levy and Kaye's sample was working at both baseline and follow-up, 14 percent who had been working at baseline were no longer employed two years later. Another 15 percent was working at follow-up that had not been previously employed. Further follow-up studies by Levy and Woolley (2007) still noted no direct linkage between neighborhood and employment; they found the same percentage employed four years after the relocation as had been employed at baseline and two years post-move. Similar evaluations of the HUD-sponsored Moving to Opportunity program failed to find significant improvement in
employment among those who relocated to less impoverished neighborhoods (Kling, Liebman & Katz, 2007; Orr et al., 2003). The studies suggest that movement out of public housing does not dramatically improve employment status, at least in the short term.

The Meaning of Work

Scholars note the importance of work in modern society. Work allows individuals to provide food, clothing, and shelter for themselves and their families, it can provide stability and order, and not infrequently, it may assist in shaping an individual’s personal identity and boosting self-esteem (Borrero & Rivera, 1980; Elliot, 1996; Friedman & Havinghurst, 1954; Kazanas, Baker, Miller, & Hannah, 1973). Past studies suggested that the majority of adults would continue to work even if they inherited enough money to live comfortably (Goodwin, 1969; Morse & Weiss, 1955; Vecchio, 1980), although recent studies point to a decline in the importance placed on work (Wray-Lake, Syvertsen, Briddell, Osgood, & Flanagan, 2011). Despite the growing desire for more leisure, work remains a significant element in the lives of most adults. Very often it is through work that individuals are able to show others their value to society.

The work of Friedmann and Havinghurst (1954), Morse and Weiss (1955) and others lead Kaplan and Tausky (1974) to advance typologies on the meaning of work. Kaplan and Tausky proposed that attitudes toward work could be divided into six categories. Four, they argued, conveyed what they called “expressions” of work, specifically work as: (1) an intrinsically satisfying activity that can lead to self-actualization; (2) a means for attaining status and prestige; (3) morally responsible; and (4) a foundation for building satisfying interpersonal relationships. The other two categories denoted work as instrumental: (5) as a means to an economic end; and (6) as an activity to keep one busy and occupied during the day.

To judge the relevance of their typologies, Kaplan and Tausky asked 275 people participating in an employment program why they wanted a job. The most prevalent response defined work as instrumental: 75 percent of the respondents said they wanted a job because they needed the money. Other
answers similarly reflected the instrumental nature of work, such as the individual who did not “want to be sitting home on my ass doing nothing” (p. 189). Respondents did not desire just any job, though. It was clear as well that they valued work as an expression of their humanity. They wanted work that paid a decent wage and provided benefits, that was secure, and that would allow them to work with friendly coworkers and supervisors.

The values highlighted by Kaplan and Tausky avoided questioning the possible negative connotations of work. Marx wrote of the alienating effects of work when the effort of the laborer merely supports the wealth of the owner (Sayers, 2005). In capitalist economies, according to Marx, work denies the humanity of workers by forcing them to be nothing more than labor machines. Borrero and Rivera (1980) submitted that jobs in which workers are defined as mere cogs in the wheel can be especially distressful for women, who are often forced by their circumstances to accept menial and underpaid jobs. With this background, Drenth (1991) added to the meaning of work typologies the possibility that some individuals may define work as an exploitative and dehumanizing experience. Thus, in addition to the economic, social, and emotional aspects of work proposed by Kaplan and Tausky and others, Drenth suggested that work may also be a burden, physically and mentally, which can lead to stress and unhappiness.

The multi-year international “Meaning of Work” study incorporated the ideas from Kaplan and Tausky, Drenth, and others into a survey instrument to measure workers’ attitudes (MOW International Research Team, 1987). England (1991) reported data showing that Americans most value good pay, satisfying work, and congenial colleagues. Residents of then West Germany were similar to their U.S. peers (Quintanilla & Wilpert, 1991) in seeing work first and foremost as economically and personally satisfying. Israeli workers also placed high value on fulfilling work, but contributing to society was more important to them than a good salary (Harpaz & Fu, 2002).

The MOW research did not assess how the poorest residents define work. The poorest residents are those least likely to have good paying jobs, jobs that might possibly lead to self-actualization, or jobs that make an obvious impact on society. If even indirectly public housing relocation programs
are designed to realign residents’ attitudes toward work, the assumption behind the policy must be that before relocation, those views are different from attitudes of the middle class. One purpose of this research is to explore whether public housing residents view work differently than other Americans, and if so, whether those attitudes change when individuals move into less impoverished neighborhoods.

**Focused Goals**

In the U.S., just over half (52 percent) of the households living in public housing are headed by neither an elderly nor disabled individual, and 71 percent of the able-bodied heads of households are mothers with children (National Center for Health and Public Housing, 2008). Thus, women make up the majority of public housing residents who could be employed. Because of their family obligations, however, women workers often find themselves facing different work situations than their male peers. Affordable childcare presents a significant hurdle for low-income women seeking employment, as does a lack of reliable transportation (Kalil, Schweingruber, & Seefeldt, 2001; Meyers, 1993; Siegel & Loman, 1991). Often undereducated and lacking in specific job skills, low-income women struggle to find full-time stable employment and to balance work with family responsibilities (Kalil et al., 2001).

The external obstacles poor women navigate can be vast, and keeping a positive sense of the possibilities can make a difference. Lee and Vinokur (2007) surveyed 1,404 women in job training programs about their sense of mastery over their environment. They learned that women who had the strongest sense of mastery also perceived the fewest barriers. Lee and Oyserman (2009) further explored what unemployed low-income women see themselves doing in the future. Almost 75 percent of the 298 women interviewed expected that they would be working and earning a living wage, and 40 percent anticipated pursuing an education to improve their career options. The authors concluded that those women with a positive outlook and a strong sense of mastery had the strongest chance of overcoming external barriers to success. If moving women out of the concentrated poverty of a public housing development opens them to seeing greater possibilities in
their lives, the women may also be emboldened to fight the inevitable challenges to being working women and mothers. Thus, a second goal of this research is to learn from relocated women about their career aspirations before and after the move out of public housing.

To some extent, the argument motivating relocation programs such as Moving to Opportunity and Hope VI is that former residents of public housing developments will discover greater opportunities for employment when they no longer live in an area of high poverty. Results on employment rates post-move have been mixed, and, as other studies have noted, finding and keeping employment can be difficult for relocated public housing residents. On the other hand, while families may not experience immediate benefits in terms of employment, the move might at least change their hopefulness about finding work. Indeed, Cove, Turner, Briggs, and Duarte (2008) observed the beginnings of such a change when they heard relocated residents articulating pride in the fact that their neighbors worked and expressing a greater motivation to work themselves. The final purpose of this paper is to explore the work attitudes and employment habits of public housing residents before and after relocation. Attitudes are not always predictive of behavior, but changing negative attitudes to work and strengthening positive attitudes could be an encouraging outcome of the move.

Research Methods

Participants and Procedures

Residents of a public housing development in a southwestern city were informed in the fall of 2001 by their local Public Housing Authority (PHA) that the land on which the development stood was to be sold and the buildings demolished. All households would need to move out within a year. The PHA offered residents personal help in finding and securing new housing and gave residents cash intended to pay for utility deposits and moving expenses. The relocation program was not part of a HOPE VI renovation; no HOPE VI money was granted to the project and no replacement units were constructed on the original site.
In the early spring of 2002, before most had left the public housing development, all remaining residents were asked to complete a questionnaire asking them about the composition of their household; employment, education, and economic information; experiences with their neighbors; psychosocial well-being; as well as some demographic information. The survey was administered on site at the public housing development (available in English and Spanish), and 200 of the 243 heads of household completed the baseline survey. Excluding all men and disabled or elderly women (defined as 60 or older), the baseline sample size used in this paper was 126. Over the next four subsequent years, a similar questionnaire was mailed to respondents at their new addresses. Respondents were paid $10 cash for their participation in Year 1, and received $15 Wal-Mart gift cards or cashiers’ checks when they returned surveys in later years. Not surprisingly, given the dispersion of residents across the area and the financial instability of most households, tracking residents became more difficult over the years. In the second year, 95 non-elderly, non-disabled women completed the survey, 89 of whom had also completed the first survey. By the third year, only 79 working-age able-bodied women returned the survey, 72 of whom had completed the initial survey. By years four and five, the sample sizes had dwindled to 60 and 58, respectively. Included in the analyses for this paper are only those women for whom there is pre-move data and only for the first three years.

In addition to survey data, every year the researchers convened three focus groups of approximately ten former residents each. Topics addressed in the focus groups varied from year to year, but always the relocated women were asked about their employment situations. Focus group participants were paid $20 cash. Information from the focus groups is also included in this paper to highlight the attitudes and experiences of the women in their own words. Finally, the larger study also included biennial structured interviews. The interviews focused largely on the needs of relocates, and therefore those data are not reported in this paper.

Close to half of the women in the year 1 sample were under the age of 26 (N = 54, 43%) with women 26-35 (N = 37, 30%) and those 35-59 (N = 34, 27%) comprising an equal proportion of the remainder. Over half (N = 71, 56%) self-identified
as African American and a third (N = 47, 37%) as Latina. Only seven women (6%) listed themselves as White and one as Asian. The overwhelming majority (N = 108, 85%) had children living in the household, and 15 of the 18 who did not were over 35 (none were under 26). All but seven women (6%) had no spouse or partner living in the household, although 37 (30%) had at some time during their lives been married. Just over half of the sample had not completed high school (N = 67, 54%) while 18% (N = 23) had some post-high school education or professional training. There was no age difference among those without a high school diploma, but as would be expected, the youngest group of women was least likely to have any post-high school educational experience (13% as compared to 23% of those over 25). Finally, over a third of the women had lived in the development one year or less (N = 45, 36%), and 41% (N = 50) had lived there between two and five years. Adding the years respondents lived in other PHA units to the years in the current development still showed that just under a third (36, 29%) had lived in public housing for one year or less, and only a quarter (N = 33, 26%) had lived in public housing for six or more years. Logically, older women had spent more years in public housing than had younger women (r = 0.40).

There was no evidence over the three years of differential attrition. Of course all respondents grew older, but the racial/ethnic characteristics of the samples were similar over the three years, as was the proportion of households with children. A few more women married or re-married by the third year, decreasing the proportion of never married women to 61% (from 64% in years 1 and 2). Finally, six women who stayed in the study completed their high school equivalency degree (GED) after moving and eleven did some post-secondary coursework. Thus, in the second year 46% and in the third year 43% of the sample had no high school degree (as compared to 54% in the first year). By the third year, 32% of the sample had some post-high school training (as compared to 18% and 25% in years 1 and 2, respectively).

Measures

Work experience. Respondents were asked their current employment status and how long they had been working (if
Those who were not employed at the time of the survey were asked when they last worked. The responses were transposed into a 3-point scale: worked the full 12 months of the previous year, worked at some point during the year, and never worked during the previous year. The employment questions were included in the surveys every year, so it is possible to see the women’s pattern of employment.

**Attitudes toward work.** Respondents were given a series of ten questions that asked what work means to them. Based on questions developed by other scholars (Kaplan & Tausky, 1974; Mor-Barak, 1995; MOW International Research Team, 1987), respondents were asked about work as: (1) an intrinsically satisfying activity (“Work helps me learn more about myself,” “Work gives me a chance to use my skills”); (2) a morally and socially responsible activity (“Work sets a good example for my children”); (3) a source of positive interpersonal experiences (“Work is a place to meet other people”); (4) an economic activity (“Work is a way of paying my bills”); and (5) a routine activity to fill time (“Work is something to do during the day rather than watch TV”). Attitudes about the alienating aspects of work (Drenth, 1991; Sayers, 2005) were measured with two items: “Work means that I have to follow other people’s rules,” and “Work does not pay me a living wage.” Finally, respondents were asked about trade-offs between work and other aspects of their lives: “Work takes time away from my family” and “Work means I cannot live in public housing.” All items were measured on a four-point scale ranging from 0 (never true) to 3 (always fits the description). In subsequent years, the scores were compared to Year 1 and rescaled to represent change: -1 (changed to be a less frequent descriptor), 0 (no change), 1 (changed to be more frequently appropriate).

**Neighborhood characteristics.** Over the three years reported here, respondents had moved into 55 different census tracts. To keep the data collection relatively simple, 2006 U.S. Census Bureau estimates were coded for the relocation census tracts. To capture the characteristics of the census tract of the original public housing development while residents still lived there, the 2000 Census data were used. According to the 2000 Census, 48% of the residents in the census tract of the housing development had incomes below the federal poverty threshold,
36% identified as Latino, and 31% as African American. Three quarters of the housing units in the public housing census tract were rental housing (76%) and 58% were apartments. The 2000 median family income within the public housing census tract ($18,426) was only 29% of the median family income of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA, $63,100).

In their first move post-relocation, 42 (48%) of the sampled women had moved into non-PHA owned units, 38 (43%) had moved into units within PHA mixed-income developments, and eight (9%) had moved into units within another traditional PHA development. The majority of women relocated into census tracts with poverty rates lower than 25% (see Table 1), and only four women moved to neighborhoods with poverty rates at or above that of their previous public housing census tract (which had been 48%). Although a quarter of the women moved to areas with median family incomes less than 50% of the MSA median, only four moved into census tracts with median family incomes as low as in the PHA neighborhood ($18,426, or 29% of the MSA median family income). A quarter of the women moved into census tracts with relatively high concentrations of Blacks, but those who selected such neighborhoods were disproportionately likely to be Black themselves (34% of Black women as compared to 5% of non-Blacks moved into higher Black concentration neighborhoods). The same was the case for Latinas. Although 14 women moved into areas with 25% or greater Latinos, 10 of those women were Latinas. In other words, 32% of Latinas as compared to 7% of non-Latinas moved into high Latino concentration neighborhoods. The demographics of neighborhoods selected were not surprising, given that the general population of the southwestern city was 34% Latino, 18% Black, and with 16% below the poverty line. Finally, the majority moved into neighborhoods with at least half rental housing and almost half chose neighborhoods in census tracts in which the majority of housing units were apartments.

For many households, the first move out of the housing development was intended only as a temporary relocation while the housing authority built or bought permanent replacement units. During the time between the administration of the Year 2 and Year 3 surveys, the housing authority opened one newly
Table 1. Census Tract Characteristics of Residents by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 1 (pre-move) N (%)</th>
<th>Year 2 N (%)</th>
<th>Year 3 N (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poverty Rate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15 (17%)</td>
<td>19 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%-25%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55 (63%)</td>
<td>42 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 25%</td>
<td>126 (100%)</td>
<td>18 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent Black</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31 (35%)</td>
<td>22 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%-25%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38 (43%)</td>
<td>38 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 25%</td>
<td>126 (100%)</td>
<td>19 (22%)</td>
<td>11 (15%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Percent Latino</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11 (12%)</td>
<td>10 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%-25%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>63 (72%)</td>
<td>50 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 25%</td>
<td>126 (100%)</td>
<td>14 (16%)</td>
<td>11 (16%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Median Family Income</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>as % of MSA</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 50%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24 (27%)</td>
<td>11 (16%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>50%-99%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>47 (53%)</td>
<td>47 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 100%</td>
<td>126 (100%)</td>
<td>17 (20%)</td>
<td>13 (18%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Percent Rental Housing</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 25%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
<td>14 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%-50%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29 (33%)</td>
<td>25 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 50%</td>
<td>126 (100%)</td>
<td>49 (55%)</td>
<td>32 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent Apartments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 25%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25 (28%)</td>
<td>26 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%-50%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21 (24%)</td>
<td>18 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 50%</td>
<td>126 (100%)</td>
<td>42 (48%)</td>
<td>27 (38%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

constructed and one newly purchased mixed-income development. Not surprisingly, therefore, the majority of the women who completed both the baseline and third year survey had moved at least a second time since leaving the development (N = 42, 59%). Four of the women still in the sample who had originally moved into a traditional PHA development and seven who had moved into private housing with a voucher re-located to a mixed-income development by the third year. The relocations (and the decrease in the sample size) led to slight
shifts in the types of neighborhoods represented in the third year sample. The majority of the sample was living in a PHA mixed-income development (N = 40, 56%), and only three (4%) were still in traditional PHA units by the third year. As Table 1 depicts, a larger proportion of the households were living in census tracts with the lowest levels of poverty. Proportionally, slightly fewer were in census tracts with high concentrations of African Americans. More were in census tracts with median family incomes close to, if not exceeding, the MSA median family income, and fewer lived in census tracts with high rental housing and apartment units. The percent of women living in neighborhoods with relatively high concentration of Latinos did not change.

Research Findings

Pre-Move Responses

Work engagement. At the time of the initial survey—conducted at the PHA development—more than half of the surveyed women (N = 64, 51%) reported that they had not worked at all during the past year, and only 26 (21%) had worked continuously throughout the entire year. Women with children still living in their home were about as likely as women without children to have worked sometime during the year [51 (48%) as compared to 10 (52%)], but they were much less likely to have worked continuously the whole year [18 (17%) as compared to 8 (42%)]. Women under 26 were more likely to have worked sometime during the year than those 26 or older [30 (57%) as compared to 30 (43%)], but they were less likely to have worked uninterruptedly [8 (15%) as compared to 18 (26%)]. Women who had not completed high school were less likely to have worked at all [25 (38%) as compared to 34 (61%)] and less likely to have worked the full year [8 (12%) as compared to 17 (30%)] than those with a high school education. There were too few married women (N = 7) to draw any conclusions about the relationship between employment and marriage.

Meaning of Work

An overwhelming majority of the women (101, 87%) agreed that working always sets a good example for their children,
and 100 (82%) agreed that work is always a way to pay bills. There was less agreement among the women on other possible definitions of work. Figure 1 highlights the respondents’ views of work while still living in the public housing development. As the figure shows, a fair number of the women saw work as an opportunity to use their skills, learn about themselves, and meet other people. On the other hand, a significant number also felt that work meant that one has to follow the rules of others while also not earning a livable wage. Interestingly, given that the overwhelming majority of the respondents were mothers of minor aged children, only 15 (13%) agreed that work always takes time away from family.

Figure 1. Year 1 Definitions of Work

As Figure 1 demonstrates, with only two exceptions, opinions about work varied across individuals. For the most part, however, the differences of opinions were unrelated to demographic characteristics. Using a scale from 0 (never) to 3 (always), tests of differences between demographic groups failed to detect a relationship, with only a few notable exceptions. Although still strongly accepted, White women (Mean = 2.33) were less likely than Black (Mean = 2.89) and Latina (Mean = 2.81) women to believe working provided a positive example to their children \([F(2,111) = 2.93, p < .05]\). White
women (Mean = 0.86) were also less likely than Black (Mean = 1.92) and Latina (Mean = 2.09) women to define work as "something to do besides watch TV" [F(2,114) = 3.17, p < .05]. Although not strongly endorsed by any of the respondents, nonetheless, women with children still in the home (Mean = 1.35) were significantly more likely than those without children (Mean = 0.71) to define work as an activity that takes time away from family [t(113) = 2.14, p < .05]. There were no significant differences in work attitudes across the age groups.

A high school diploma and, more importantly, training beyond high school, generally open more skill-based employment opportunities for individuals. Not surprisingly, therefore, women who had higher educations were more likely than others to define work as a place where they can use their skills and a place where they can learn more about themselves. Women with post-high school training were more likely to use these definitions (Mean = 2.91 for using skills; 2.71 for learning about self) than women with only a high school diploma (Mean = 2.53 and 2.55, respectively), who, in turn, supported the meanings more than those without even a high school education (Mean = 2.43 and 2.0, respectively) [F(2,111) = 3.46 and F(2,104) = 6.81, p < .05]. Perhaps because they valued their work more, high school graduates and post-graduates also were more likely than non-graduates to agree that work sets a good example for their children (Mean = 3.0, 2.91, and 2.67 for post-graduates, graduates, and non-graduates, respectively) [F(2,110) = 3.28, p < .05].

There was little difference in work attitudes between those who had worked in the past year and those who had not worked. There were two definitions of work that seemed related to employment experience. Women who worked continuously (Mean = 2.96) were more likely than off-and-on workers (Mean = 2.79) and non-workers (Mean = 2.51) to define work as an activity that pays bills [F(2,166) = 3.65, p < .05]. They were also less likely to describe work as a place where one must follow the rules of others (Mean = 1.92, 2.06, and 2.53, respectively) [F(2,112) = 5.64, p < .01]. Unexpectedly, workers were no different from non-workers in their sense of a time tradeoff between work and family.
Desired Job Skills and Career Goals

When asked if they would like to learn a job skill, and if so, what they would like to study, 80 women (63%) gave a response. The largest group (N = 29) wanted to learn more about computers, although some of those also wanted other preparation as well. A third (N = 27) said they would like training that would lead to a job in a medical profession, such as nursing, phlebotomy, and medical or dental assistance. Other responses included training in medical record keeping, clerical skills, cosmetology, paralegal studies, and English as a second language.

Asked to describe their ideal job, 96 (75%) of the women wrote a response. About a quarter (N = 26) mentioned a job that involved computers, clerical, or office work. Another quarter (N = 25) listed a job in a medical profession (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant, dental assistant). For the most part, the career aspirations reflected the occupations for which housing authorities and/or community colleges traditionally offer training, although a few dreamt of jobs that would require post-graduate study (e.g., dentist, physician, and pharmacist). While most provided a specific career, some respondents expressed a less precise vision of what they wanted to do. For example, one respondent said she wanted to be a “receptionist or teacher,” while another listed only “in a factory or restaurant.” Perhaps reflecting on their current employment situations, some replied, “anything,” “it really doesn’t matter,” or “a job that pays more.”

Respondents with some post-high school education were more likely than their less educated peers to list a medical focused career (50% as compared to 20%), while respondents without a high school diploma were more likely to desire a clerical job (30% as compared to 23%). Women without a high school degree also tended to provide more general ideas of what they might like to do (e.g., “working in an office” or “working at a hospital”) while post-high school educated women were more specific (“registered nurse,” “pharmacy technician,” or “cosmetologist”). Forty percent of the respondents without a high school degree either left the question blank or wrote in that they did not know or would take any job. On the other hand, 27% of high school graduates and 22% of those with a
post-high school education skipped the question. Career aspirations did not differ between those who had worked in the previous year and those who had not worked, nor did any of the other demographic characteristics appear to relate to career goals.

Post-Move Responses

Changes in employment. Almost half of the 41 respondents who had been without work for a year before the move reported working sometime during the year following the move, and only 8 (19%) of the 43 who had worked during the year before the move were unemployed the year after. On the other hand, 23 (56%) of the long-term unemployed remained unemployed into the second year of data collection. By the third year of data collection (second year post-move), only 15 (25%) of the 59 with three years of information had not yet entered the workforce. Most respondents entered and exited work over the period of data collection, although four women worked continuously all 36 months. The data presented in Figure 2 includes those women who completed the Year 2 or the Year 3 survey, as well as those who completed both post-move surveys. The figure highlights a positive potential impact of the move. Those who had been working while living in the PHA development were likely to continue to be employed after the move, and those who had been unemployed in the year prior to the move were as likely to start working as stay unemployed post-relocation.

In the year after the move, previously unemployed younger women were much more likely than older women to be in the workforce. Only five (36%) of the 14 women under 26 in the first post-move year who had not worked in the year before the move remained unemployed, but 12 (92%) of the 13 women over 35 were still not working. Among the smaller sample of women who completed both the second and the third year surveys, three (30%) of the ten younger women never reported working, but eight (89%) of the nine older women never entered the workforce. Women between 26 and 35 were similar to their younger peers in their workforce participation: four (33%) of the 12 previously unemployed remained without work through the third year. Thus, long-term unemployment dropped after the move, but only for women under 40.
As already mentioned, high school educated respondents, and especially those with post-high school training, were more likely than those who had never graduated to already be in the workforce when living in the PHA development. That said, among the women who had not worked the year before the move, high school graduates were no more likely than non-graduates to be working in the first post-move year; 14 (58%) of the 24 non-graduates remained unemployed as compared to nine (56%) of the 16 graduates. Two years after the move, education still was not a useful factor in predicting which previously unemployed woman would enter the workforce.

Theory would predict that women who moved into neighborhoods with lower poverty rates and higher median incomes would be more prone to enter the workforce than those who continued to live in lower-income and higher-poverty areas. Although the sample size was small, the findings during the first post-move year failed to show a striking connection between employment and neighborhood. In fact, five (62%) of the eight previously unemployed women who moved into low poverty neighborhoods were still not working while five (62%) of the eight who moved into high poverty neighborhoods began working. Furthermore, although four (67%) of the six who moved into neighborhoods with median family incomes equal to or above the MSA median entered the workforce
after the move, so too did seven (58%) of the 12 who moved into neighborhoods with median family incomes lower than 50% of the MSA median. Among the even smaller sample of 62 women who completed the initial and first two post-move surveys, only 13 (21%) continued to be unemployed the entire time. These long-term unemployed women were more likely than others to have moved into a lower-poverty neighborhood (6, 46% as compared to 13, 26%) and just as likely to be living in the highest income areas (1, 8% as compared to 8, 16%). In other words, there was no clear pattern between workforce entrance and the economic characteristics of the receiving neighborhood.

Focus group discussions about the job search process may shed light on the seeming lack of neighborhood influence. Many of the participants expressed frustration by what they felt was harmful stereotyping. A few suggested the discrimination was based on race or ethnicity, but more often than not, the women felt they were branded as “public housing residents.” As one woman living in a mixed-income development described it, they were “blackballed from this area. If we put down our address, we don’t get calls.” Another lamented, “We put in applications, but few people get hired from around here. We see hiring signs, but we go in and no one calls us.” Some persevered and eventually found work, others reported that “nobody every calls me back; I quit looking.” None of these comments was made by women living in the lowest income areas.

Changes in definitions of work. A year after the forced relocation, the majority of respondents continued to define work in terms of its social responsibility (i.e., setting a good example for their children) and economics (i.e., a means to pay bills), and nearly all gave the same response on the two items that they had given during the first year survey. A comment made in a focus group shortly after the move reflects respondents’ views on work as an obligation: “[Life is hard] but people still need to get up and go to work,” while another expressed her post-move pride in working when she said enthusiastically, “This is the longest I have ever worked at one job... two months at a daycare center!”

In the aggregate, the proportion of women supporting specific meanings of work did not fluctuate from year to year. The
distribution of responses shown for the first year in Figure 1 was closely mimicked in years 2 and 3 as well. However, the opinions of individuals did change over the years. As Figure 3 shows, for example, some women came to see work as more likely a place they can use their skills, learn about themselves, and meet new people, while others gravitated away from seeing work in those terms. The greatest change was in the number of women defining work as providing a living wage. About a quarter (16 out of 69) were more likely to see work as paying a decent way, but nearly 40 percent (N = 26) gave a response suggesting they were even less likely to see work as a way to make ends meet. Interestingly as well, nearly a third of the women (31 out of 71) thought it even more the case that working meant they would have to leave public housing, despite information they should have received from the housing authority telling them otherwise.

Figure 3. Changes in Individuals' Definitions of Work, Year 1 to Year 2

To some extent, women who moved into neighborhoods with lower poverty and higher median family incomes changed their definitions of work differently from those who moved into higher poverty and lower median income neighborhoods. The direction of the change suggested an increasingly more
positive view of some aspects of employment among those who moved into lower poverty areas. For example, six (50%) of the 12 women who moved into neighborhoods with poverty levels below 10 percent responded that work was more likely a place to use their skills, while none of the 15 women who moved into neighborhoods with poverty rates above 25% changed in a similar direction. Changes in attitudes about the utility of work as a place to meet people showed a similar pattern: lower poverty, more likely to see work as place to connect with others. A similar pattern emerged between women who moved to areas with median family incomes at or above the MSA median as compared to those who moved into less affluent neighborhoods.

The financial characteristics of the receiving neighborhood did not correspond to changes in attitudes about work providing a living wage, but they did seem to link to fears about earning too much to live in public housing. Women who moved to high poverty or low median income neighborhoods became even less likely to define work as a hindrance to living in public housing. Nine out of the 21 (43%) women in neighborhoods with median incomes lower than 50 percent of the MSA median were less likely to agree that work meant leaving public housing than they had before the move, but only three of the 12 (25%) who moved to high income areas changed similarly. Although the numbers were small, the findings suggested that the financial well-being of a neighborhood might influence beliefs about work.

Changes in career goals. A year after the move, 78 of the 89 women surveyed provided a brief description of their ideal career. Fewer than a third of the women (N = 24) listed the same career they had desired before the move, although those who did tended to be more precise in their explanation the second time around. For example, one woman who in the first survey wrote “working with people” responded with “social worker” in the second survey. Another who had wanted a “higher degree in nursing” before the move clarified the goal as a career in “nursing management” when asked a year later. There was no single career aspiration that appeared solidly fixed. Thus, although four women stayed with their dream of being a nurse, five who had said they wanted to be a nurse changed their minds and four who had not previously said
they were interested in nursing became so after the move. Three who had said they would take any job in the first year reiterated in the second year that same wish.

Table 2. Changes in Career Aspirations, Pre- and Post-Move by Receiving Neighborhood’s Percent of Median Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Census Tract Percent of Median Family Income</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 50% (N = 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same Career</td>
<td>N = 8 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Related</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Related</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change or Addition</td>
<td>N = 12 (55%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>From Specific to “Anything”</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>From “Anything” to Specific</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Medical Related</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Medical Related</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>From Computer Related</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Computer Related</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Anything” (Y1), “Anything” (Y2)</td>
<td>N = 2 (9%)</td>
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Over 40 percent of the career ambitions listed in the first post-move survey were different from those listed pre-move (N = 33). Some of the changes were within the same general field of work but differed in the specific occupation, such as the woman who before the move wrote that she wanted to be a physician and after the move said her ideal career would be an x-ray technician. More often, though, the switch was into a
substantially different career direction. For example, a change from being a nurse to an elementary school teacher, from a cosmetologist to a remodeler, or from a job in criminal justice to one in real estate. Also noticeable were the eight women who provided a career goal before the move, but a year later wanted only "a steady, good paying, dependable job." Finally, 18 women listed a job aspiration in the post-move survey but had left the question blank the previous year. Table 2 summarizes the findings.

Policies that urge families to move out of public housing developments and into middle income neighborhoods are driven in part by the sense that living among those earning more will motivate the poor to improve their career trajectories. The results were suggestive of neighborhood differences, bearing in mind that once divided by neighborhood income, the samples were quite small. Proportionately, more of the women who moved into lower income neighborhoods reported the same career aspirations before and after the move as compared to women who moved into neighborhoods at the median or higher. As Table 2 shows, 21 (33%) of the 63 in areas with median incomes below the MSA median reported the same career while only three (20%) of the 15 in higher income areas gave the same goal. It is important to note that there was no visible difference in the initial goals between women who moved into higher and lower income areas. In other words, those women who kept the same career paths were not necessarily expressing low expectations.

More informative on the potential success of relocation were the responses from those who changed their occupational targets. None of the 15 who moved into a higher income area said that just any job would do. In comparison, eight (13%) of the women in census tracts below the MSA median income changed their career expectations from a specific occupation to "anything that pays good," "any right at this moment," or similar terms. Six women had suggested in the first survey that they would be willing to take any job. After the move, three continued to say they would take anything (all in areas below the median income) and three listed a specific career (one in a lower income neighborhood and two in above median income neighborhoods). Thus, the data did not suggest that living in a higher income neighborhood might raise women's career
aspirations—especially since many of those aspirations were not previously low. On the other hand, they did hint that living in a less economically distressed area might provide low income women the opportunity to think about what they want to do in their careers and to move beyond expecting only what they felt they could get.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

England (1991) learned that the most important aspect of work to employed Americans is the pay. The women in this study, regardless their employment status, also saw work first and foremost as an economic activity, or as measured through the survey, a way to pay their bills. England had also found that Americans tend to value work because it can be a personally satisfying activity. On this characteristic, the low-income women in this study were not unanimous in their endorsement. Some accepted that work could be personally rewarding, especially the women who had post-high school training, but the definition was not nearly as accepted among the former public housing women as England had found in his sample of employed individuals. Given the types of jobs the women often held, that they failed to see work as personally uplifting should not be surprising. At the time of the initial survey, those who were employed worked as housekeepers, cashiers, and telemarketers, for example—hardly occupations that many would find intrinsically fulfilling. Data from unemployed workers reported by Brief, Konovsky, Goodwin, and Link (1995) similarly suggest that the meaning of work may be primarily utilitarian when the individual is not in an otherwise satisfying employment situation. Furthermore, that the overwhelming majority of the women agreed that working sets a good example for their children, suggests that work is important to them for more than merely meeting financial needs. Thus, the results fail to depict public housing residents as anything other than typical of all Americans when it comes to their definition of work.

Much has been written of the real and potential impacts of moving public housing residents out of areas of concentrated poverty (e.g., Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2002; Varady & Walker, 2003). Expectations of
improved job prospects is one important goal of relocation programs, and the results of this study suggest that the women did increase their workforce participation in the first two years following their move from public housing. However, whether individuals became employed post-move showed no relationship to the economic well-being of the neighborhood into which they moved. Women who moved into neighborhoods with above average median incomes were no more likely to be working post-relocation than those who moved into areas not dissimilar economically from their previous public housing neighborhood.

While there were no differences in overall employment, where the economics of the neighborhood showed a possible impact was in altering—or at least fine-tuning—the career aspirations of the relocated women. The women who found themselves living among the relatively more affluent were more likely than those remaining in lower income areas to provide clear and specific occupational goals. Women remaining in lower income neighborhoods had a tendency to talk in general terms, or worse, to limit their expectations to whatever they could get. While wanting a well-paying job is hardly a negative outcome, that the women were less likely to explain what type of job they would like suggests that their minds were more on finding a job and less on seeking emotionally satisfying work.

Of course, this study relied on the responses of a relatively small number of women living in one city over a three-year period. Although comparisons between those who left and those who remained suggest they were similar at baseline, there is no way of knowing whether they had different relocation experiences. Perhaps those who dropped out of the study were steadily employed and integrating into their new neighborhood better than those who continued to participate in the study. Alternatively, perhaps they felt so disenfranchised as to no longer care. It is impossible to know.

Furthermore, because all the respondents were relocated into neighborhoods within the same city, the economic situation of the area affected all similarly. Cove, Turner, Briggs, de Souza, and Duarte (2008) noted different employment patterns in Moving to Opportunity participants located in different cities, and Holzer, Stoll, and Wissoker (2004) found that
employers viewed welfare recipient workers differently depending in which city they worked. Were the dataset larger and more complete, encompassing more cities with greater economic-base diversity and including more residents over all time periods, other nuanced changes might have come to light.

Finally, it is important to remember that all the data were self-reported by the residents. The survey depended on the honesty of the respondents in recounting their employment history as well as describing their attitudes.

Despite the small sample, the findings are perhaps useful for two primary reasons. One, they show that women living in public housing are not different than other Americans in their thoughts about work. They value the financial gain employment brings, and they recognize the social value in working. Second, the results suggest that when low-income residents live among those with higher incomes they may more easily imagine themselves in satisfying occupations.

References


Between Stonewall and AIDS: Initial Efforts to Establish Gay and Lesbian Social Services

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Little has been written about gay and lesbian communities' efforts to address health and human service concerns prior to the HIV/AIDS crisis. This article analyzes content from The Advocate along with organizational documents from the early 1970s to explore the health issues addressed by these fledgling providers. Major concerns identified include social adjustment to a gay or lesbian identity, chemical health, sexual health, and family supports. These findings depict a service context strained by funding instability, workplace turmoil, neighborhood hostility, and high levels of consumer needs that would later come to characterize the complex nature of AIDS service work.

Key words: Gay men, lesbians, health care, social services, community centers, Stonewall, HIV/AIDS

Much of the attention paid to post-Stonewall social movements organized by gay men and lesbians has focused on activism that challenged discriminatory laws and policies, pioneering political figures like Harvey Milk in San Francisco, or AIDS-related activism starting in the 1980s. While a visible and sustained advocacy movement is now widely recognized in the United States, little has been written about the ways in which gay men and lesbians also identified unique health and human service concerns as they began to form visible communities in the years between the Stonewall Riots of 1969 and the onset of HIV/AIDS in the late 1970s. This article will explore the problems gay men and lesbians identified and attempted to address during a period when homosexuality was still predominantly viewed as a criminal, pathological behavior that
invited numerous public consequences including arrest, loss of employment or housing, verbal harassment, physical violence, and sometimes death. (Recognizing that current nomenclature includes a more expansive range of sexual minority identities including bisexual and transgender individuals, this article uses the terms “gay” and “lesbian” to reflect the predominant self-descriptions of community members at that time.)

While advocacy to the larger public has resulted in significant gains for gay and lesbian civil rights, this paper argues that the history of these communities includes a lesser-recognized component, which illuminates the inward-looking efforts of professional workers and volunteers—for the most part in urban areas—who collectively took an interest in developing gay-affirming responses to the medical and psychosocial problems occurring among their contemporaries. In light of the devastating impact that HIV/AIDS would have in the coming decade, the accounts of these early providers collectively inform our understanding of an emerging community health movement that, although unprepared for a crisis of this magnitude, was beginning to develop a range of professional services tailored to address its members' biological, psychological, and social needs.

Background

This paper will address three main questions. First, what health and social service issues did gay men and lesbians who participated in urban post-Stonewall community development identify as uniquely impacting their peers due to sexual minority status? Second, what solutions did community members propose for addressing these needs, and to whom did they assign responsibility for carrying out these solutions? Third, what challenges did these fledgling providers encounter during this era, and how did they work to overcome setbacks?

The period examined here—roughly 1969 to 1976—is significant due to the Stonewall riots' galvanizing influence on an emerging cohort of militant activists across the United States, the American Psychiatric Association's 1973 decriminalization of homosexuality as a diagnosable mental illness, and the retrospective discovery that Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) had entered and disseminated among gay men in the United
States by the late 1970s (Quan et al., 2002). The history of gay-identified health organizations during this period can be found in a variety of disparate collections concerning gay and lesbian social movements, including administrative records, personal documents, individual interviews, and news articles from communities across the U.S. The sources available primarily depict the efforts of urban gay men and lesbians, a reflection of both the limitations of rural avenues for building visible gay-identified movements during this period and also the trend during post-World War II decades of gay and lesbian migration to larger cities where social support and political strength could be found in greater concentration (Kaiser, 1997).

Most of this content analysis concentrates on materials published in *The Advocate*, a Los Angeles-based gay and lesbian newspaper with a nationwide scope that has covered a broad range of topics since its launch in September 1967 (Kaiser, 1997). While numerous gay and lesbian periodicals came into existence before and since its initial launch, *The Advocate* offers an especially robust source for understanding issues concerning gay-identified communities at the time, given the stability of its business operations and its ability from early on to collect and disseminate news stories from sources across the nation. Published bi-weekly during these years, by the middle of the decade its nationwide distribution had reached 40,000 copies per issue and it had gained a reputation as “the most important gay-owned and operated magazine in America” (Kaiser, 1997, p. 172).

Content from late 1969 through 1976—including news briefs, articles, in-depth special reports, and advertisements—was analyzed first to determine the extent to which health and social service issues were addressed in gay-related news and commentaries of the time, and second to discern the extent to which the gay and lesbian community’s attention to these issues had expanded by the end of this relatively brief period. Examples drawn from *Advocate* stories were corroborated with a small sampling of organizational papers from this period to illustrate how gay men, lesbians, and their fledgling community organizations addressed these challenges in practice, policy, and public discourse.
Supportive Organizations Predating Stonewall

A number of historians have documented how, despite the fact that homosexuality was widely viewed as both a crime and a psychopathology, homosexual or homophile-identified people made efforts to change discriminatory attitudes and policies prior to 1969. Homophile support and advocacy organizations such as the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis, and gay veterans' groups emerged in the MacCarthyist years following World War II, when the very act of organizing a pro-homosexual movement presented a number of risks for these early advocates. Suspected homosexuals encountered monitoring, surveillance, and occasional blackmailing, not only in bars and public cruising areas, but also social meetings and mail sent through the U.S. Postal Service (Carter, 2004; Charles, 2010; Kaiser, 1997; Marcus, 1992). Still, gay men and lesbians during this time found ways to reach out and form supportive networks that focused primarily on establishing safe social spaces (often in private homes) and advocating for legal reform by emphasizing respectability and human dignity (Carter, 2004; Kaiser, 1997; Marcus, 1992).

The argument for relaxing anti-gay policies was bolstered in the 1950s and 1960s by key behavioral studies including those of Alfred Kinsey and Evelyn Hooker. However, it was Stonewall, a June 1969 weekend of violent clashes between Greenwich Village gay bar patrons and New York City police officers, that served as the catalyst for an emerging militant movement that both demanded acceptance from mainstream society and exhorted gay people to "come out" and gain political strength in numbers (Carter, 2004; Kaiser, 1997; Marcus, 1992). In the ensuing years, this movement would expand across many parts of the United States, with constituencies in larger cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco spearheading the development of new community structures to meet the health and social support needs of gay men and lesbians across a range of issues and concerns. The sections to follow will identify these nascent communities' major health concerns during this period and show examples of how they organized and delivered services, along with how workers found resourceful ways to cope with the numerous obstacles they encountered.
Health and Social Service Concerns Identified Post-Stonewall

The accelerating visibility of the militant movement and its associated media offered opportunities to promote and share supportive resources in a more organized and comprehensive manner than had previously existed. Dating back to late 1969, The Advocate highlighted community members' efforts to catalog and disseminate resource guides covering all fifty states, and by the mid-1970s, gay community service centers had arisen and were duly reported from a number of cities, including Costa Mesa, Portland (Maine), Dallas, Kansas City (Missouri), and Ottawa (Canada). "Advocate Adviser," an advice column featuring a panel of health experts, began responding to readers' inquiries in September 1975 and frequently referred letter-writers to gay and lesbian services operating in their local communities.

Within a few years, some of the earliest organizations, such as L.A.'s Gay Community Services Center, had been awarded sizable public health grants addressing issues such as mental health and venereal disease. Still, the need for affirmative social support remained central to many of these services, with counseling centers and volunteer-operated telephone hotlines attending to individuals' concerns, including coming out, relationship difficulties, or loneliness and isolation (Maves, 1975b; "Women Respond," 1972; Young, 1972). Among the most consistently identified concerns during this period, four specifically stand out: social adjustment, chemical health, sexual health, and family supports.

Social Adjustment to a Gay or Lesbian Identity

While studies have historically pointed to disproportionate levels of mental health problems among sexual minority populations, a great deal of evidence attributes at least some of these disparities to contextual factors, including marginalized status within society, lack of an intimate partner, prior experiences of anti-gay violence and discrimination, sexual victimization, and high levels of community isolation (Bradford, Ryan, & Rothblum, 1994; Meyer, 2003; Mills et al., 2004). To that end, even though this section cites examples of gay-affirming counseling centers, for a number of gay men and lesbians
during this era, having safe space to meet other homosexual-identified individuals represented their first and most pressing need.

For those who struggled to accept and understand their sexual attractions, the availability of supportive resources in mainstream society remained scarce, given that many members of the medical and mental health establishments still adhered to the premise that homosexuality was a mental illness ("Gays to Try," 1971; Marcus, 1992; Maves, 1975b). In the immediate years following Stonewall, movement leaders in cities like New York and Los Angeles focused on securing and maintaining multi-purpose spaces that could accommodate small discussion groups and large-scale meetings, reading rooms, coffee houses, individual counseling sessions, and social alternatives to gay bar scenes ("Gay Community Center," 1971; Gibson, 1970; "WSDG Drives," 1970). The Minneapolis-based Gay House, funded in part with grants from a local Protestant foundation, reached out to gay youth arriving to the city from rural areas while also linking with other relief agencies providing food, job placement, legal services, and other forms of immediate assistance ("Church Group," 1971). Early ventures also included counseling centers staffed by therapists who, contrary to the profession's dominant point of view, would only focus on homosexuality if it was determined to be a "causative factor in unhappiness" while emphasizing, "[i]f homosexuality is a positive function of your life it will not be up for discussion" ("Gays to Try," 1971, p. 2).

Supporting the needs of gay-identified individuals who also experienced marginalization due to other facets of their identity stood out as a consistent sub-theme within the early militant movement. In some cases, groups tried to create their own separate spaces, distinguishable from other gay or lesbian identified structures. For instance, The Advocate noted various efforts in the early to mid-1970s to establish separate help centers for gay Latin Americans ("Unidos Plans," 1971), transgender or gender-nonconforming persons ("One Brick," 1971; "Transsexual Help," 1971), and gay men and women who were deaf or hard of hearing (Emery, 1976; "Gay is Good," 1976).

Often, however, efforts targeting such groups as gay youth (Barney, 1971; "One Brick," 1971), gay overeaters ("Miscellany," 1976), and gay and lesbian prisoners and ex-offenders
Between Stonewall and AIDS

(“Ex-offender Re-entry,” 1976; Gregory, 1972b; “Let’s ‘Join Hands,’” 1972; “News Briefs,” 1976; “Stonewall Prison Program,” 1972) were simply introduced as new programs within existing community services. Contributor David Rothenberg (1976) even highlighted the efforts of incarcerated gay male prisoners to organize their own supportive nationwide network among those still living “behind the walls” for various criminal offenses. Although a number of these community spaces supported various activities, ranging from counseling and provision of basic needs to support groups and social events, the proceeding sections will illustrate that in a relatively brief span of time, organizations began to identify commonly-held needs beyond those which social support could provide, leading to a rapid and sometimes haphazard growth in funding and infrastructure by the middle of the 1970s.

Chemical Health

The increased visibility of, and access to, gay-identified social spaces led providers to recognize that chemical dependency exerted an especially widespread influence and negative impact on gay men and lesbians already experiencing social stigma and isolation due to their sexual minority status (Hicks, 2000; Kus & Latcovich, 1995; Skinner, 1994; Wong, Weiss, Ayala, & Kipke, 2010). Kus and Latcovich (1995) noted that the unique challenges presented by the intersection of sexual identity and chemical dependency were apparent to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) co-founder Bill Wilson as early as the 1940s, but gay-identified AA groups would not emerge until several years later. News briefs and articles in The Advocate in the immediate post-Stonewall years (1969–1972) noted the increasing proliferation of gay-identified AA and other groups aiming to provide discreet support to individuals “forced to live a schizophrenic existence (straight work world and gay social life)... where alcoholism could be brought about by psychological problems” (Phillips, 1971, p. 12).

By the mid-1970s, a growing number of advocates had concluded that the unique service needs of gay-identified individuals required a different approach than simply carving out space within existing chemical health resources. A series of Advocate special reports in 1976 characterized alcoholism in
the Los Angeles gay community as having reached "pandemic" proportions, citing locally-based research estimating that approximately one-third of gay residents were in the danger stages of alcohol consumption (Shilts, 1976a) and noting that "strict" alcoholism—especially among gay men and lesbians—was becoming more scarce, while polydrug use was observed to be more prevalent (West, 1976). The reports identified the limited number of venues for socialization as a contributing factor, with gay bars for men and private house parties among lesbians offering social outlets that did not exist in the heterosexual world. Journalist Randy Shilts (1976a) described the limitations of existing treatment modalities, which included providers who: prioritized treating patients' homosexuality before addressing their substance use; rejected gay male or lesbian patients upon learning of their sexuality; or, urged gay men and lesbians to remain silent lest they provoke verbal or physical abuse from other patients (Shilts, 1976a). The preferred solution to these problems, the author argued, would be "to have gay people work with gay alcoholics" (Shilts, 1976a, p. 23).

In response to the perceived need for gay-operated chemical health services, a number of treatment centers emerged in cities, including San Francisco’s Alcoholism Services for the Homosexual Community, Seattle’s Stonewall Therapeutic Center, and Minneapolis’ Christopher Street. A jointly-sponsored project of the University of Minnesota and the locally-based Gay Community Services organization, Christopher Street aimed to "enhance the possibility for chemically dependent gays and lesbians to enter the existing continuum of care" while providing equal treatment within this system and offering preventive services for sexual abuse survivors (Shambach, Green, & Ralke, 1976). The project offered direct services not available to gay men and lesbians within existing treatment systems at the time, with the aim of improving gay and lesbian patients’ likelihood of achieving and staying chemical-free (Shambach et al., 1976). Consistent across both the Christopher Street literature and the Advocate special reports of the time was an emphasis on the need for sober alternatives to the gay and lesbian community’s existing social outlets. Among its various support group offerings, Christopher Street’s newsletter highlighted ongoing activities that included a lesbian coffee...
house night, gay karate classes, movie nights, and a "maverick encounters" group (Shambach et al., 1976).

Despite funding limitations, some chemical health services for gay men and lesbians managed to secure grants from local governments, along with backing from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA) ("Big U.S. Grant," 1973; Shambach, Green, & Ralke, 1976; Shilts, 1976a). A prevailing sentiment in The Advocate's reporting at the time viewed solutions to the growing problem as the responsibility of both the gay community and the government: "[T]ax money is not enough. Nearly every granting organization requires matching funds, or at least expects you to have a community-based following" (Shilts, 1976a, p. 25). To that end, many providers featured in these reports posited that the larger challenge of addressing chemical health would require gay and lesbian communities to develop and underwrite their own sober alternatives to bars and bathhouses (Shilts, 1976a; West, 1976).

**Sexual Health**

Although gay men's sexual health would draw far greater public attention and scrutiny with the discovery of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, concerns about sexually transmitted infections (STI) were raised in The Advocate's pages as early as 1971. In a first-person commentary detailing his experiences with being tested and treated for syphilis and gonorrhea, contributor Sam Diego described the range of emotions he experienced, first with detecting symptoms and later with receiving an ominous telegram ordering him to report immediately to the local health department (Diego, 1971). Diego's conversational tone communicated both the emotional turbulence of his experiences ("I tried to pull myself together but kept remembering that as a small child I had this rare blood disease...") and the ways in which he used humor to cope with his discomfort ("He asked after each name, 'Did he pack you or did you pack him?' [author's italics] Pack! I felt like a Baskin Robbins employee") (Diego, 1971, p. 20).

In the early 1970s, a growing awareness of sexually-transmitted infections among gay men evoked increasingly urgent responses that included both a focus on establishing alternative clinics in gay community centers and heightened but
controversial public awareness efforts on local television ("Male Art," 1972; "N.Y. Groups," 1972). By the middle of the decade, sexually-transmitted infections among gay men had become so widespread that an Advocate special report characterized the problem—citing sources from Los Angeles, Hawaii, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C.—as "pandemic" and attributed most of the blame to public health officials and medical practitioners who did little to educate or properly screen gay male patients (Shilts, 1976c). The Shilts-authored piece characterized the federal government as "bellyaching" about high infection rates among gay men while neglecting to commit any additional funding to support their specific needs, and also described the response of many private clinicians as "outright hostile" to their gay male patients, preferring to respond to infections as a moral rather than a medical problem (Shilts, 1976c). Shilts documented how local efforts to produce and disseminate gay-friendly sexual health pamphlets encountered resistance from established public health overseers such as the Colorado Action Council on Venereal Disease, which refused to print any materials, and the Minnesota Department of Health, which finally released its first brochure after two years of pressuring from local activists (Shilts, 1976c).

Echoing its views on chemical dependency treatment, The Advocate argued that gay-led venereal disease (VD) clinics could more effectively serve gay patients' needs by providing a relaxed, nonjudgmental alternative that offered throat and rectal screening not usually provided by traditional clinic settings (Erickson, 1976; "Helping," 1973). While L.A.'s Gay Community Services Center expanded to include VD services, other cities, such as New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C. saw the emergence of new clinics specializing in gay men's sexual health (Shilts, 1976c). Although calls for federal funding of gay venereal disease treatment and prevention would result in limited but still first of its kind government support, Shilts (1976c) noted that the disproportionate number of cases, especially of syphilis and gonorrhea, far exceeded the resources available to test, treat, and prevent infections.

In the absence of a centrally coordinated, government-led response, it was suggested that members of the gay community would need to fashion their own approach to combating the
insurgence of infections. An *Advocate* commentary at the time observed, "Until public health authorities return to us some of our tax dollars in services instead of harassment, we gay people will have to finance this work ourselves" ("Opening Space," 1976, p. 5). Attempted solutions would include building partnerships to offer free, routine testing and treatment at local bars and bathhouses, promoting the desirability of sexual health screenings in print advertisements, and soliciting help from volunteers to augment the small number of staff conducting patient interviews and blood draws ("GCSC VD Clinic," 1975; Shilts, 1976c).

**Family Supports**

In the 1970s, issues regarding family support as it related to gay men and lesbians emerged as two distinct but overlapping categories. First, an outgrowth of residential services emerged from the early community centers to support gay and lesbian individuals (especially youth and gender nonconforming persons) who, by virtue of their sexual identity, had lost all material and emotional support from their families of origin ("Houston Group," 1971; "One Brick," 1971; Warman, 1971; Wicker, 1973). Liberation House, an early outgrowth of the L.A. Gay Community Services Center, housed up to ten gay male street youth at one time, occupying a leased bungalow in a residential area and quickly gaining recognition from the county's juvenile welfare and general assistance programs. In *The Advocate's* 1971 profile of the new initiative, house overseer John Platania commented,

A lot of us in the gay community were always talking about our responsibilities. We knew we had these hundreds of young guys around—on the bum, starving, lots of them sick and infected, loaded on speed and the whole bit. We all said sure, we've got to do something about this. But we never did." (Warman, 1971, p. 4)

The number of youths who needed assistance was evident almost immediately, as the population of Liberation House was roughly half the number of gay youths who had been sleeping on the floor of an existing organization and, within several weeks it was announced that a second, larger Liberation House had opened as well ("Liberation House," 1971).
The second concern related to family support addressed the unique experiences of families raised by gay and lesbian parents (biological, adopted, or foster). As the militant movement gave rise to an established network of supportive services, a number of existing family service agencies took a proactive interest in gay and lesbian experiences, reaching out, for example, to include gay couples in marriage and parenting counseling (“Hospital’s Marriage Counseling,” 1970), and in San Francisco naming a gay man and lesbian as representatives to the prominent Family Service Agency (“Family Services,” 1971). Within a few states, this increased attention eventually led to some gay-affirming policy shifts. For example, in 1976, Massachusetts’ Department of Public Welfare issued the results of a yearlong investigation of the state’s foster placement system, concluding that homosexuality in and of itself did not constitute unsuitability for parenting (“No Evidence,” 1976) and the State of California ruled that gay adults without histories of mental illness or criminal sexual conduct toward children could be permitted to serve as foster parents (“CA Gay Foster,” 1976). However, efforts to recognize and draw on the perspectives of gay men and lesbians faced resistance from a number of stakeholders, including entrenched bureaucrats and judges.

One case illustrating this difficulty came from Washington State and involved Pat Davis, a sixteen-year old gay youth who was placed with Gary McQuiston and John Clark, a gay couple that previously had been deemed suitable to foster based on the recommendations of multiple social workers. Despite the youth’s successful adjustment to living with the couple, it was reported that a probate judge immediately revoked the placement when it was brought to his attention, refusing to even formally hear the case in his courtroom (Shilts, 1975a). Similarly, child custody battles resulting from divorce were characterized as nearly insurmountable for many gay and lesbian parents, some of whom faced the additional burdens of proving psychological “fitness” while fearing negative consequences for their children should they introduce a same-sex partner to the household or publicly acknowledge being gay or lesbian (Gengle, 1975; Gregory, 1972a; Maves, 1975a). Additionally, popular responses toward parents from other gay people varied. In San Francisco, for example, while members
of the support group "Gay Fathers United" expressed surprise at the goodwill they received during the annual Pride parade, members of "Lesbian Mothers and Friends" tabling the Castro Street Fair recounted a number of derogatory comments such as "child-hating lesbians" and "[lesbians] who sleep with men" from other gay men and women (Gengle, 1975; Maves, 1975a, p. 33).

Facing a society that still largely viewed homosexuality as harmful to healthy childrearing, and lacking widespread popular support from other community members, lesbian and gay parents formed supportive groups to share their experiences, challenge harmful stereotypes, and provide referrals for legal assistance when necessary ("Aid to Gay," 1972; Gengle, 1975; Maves, 1975a). Although presently a number of research studies exist indicating that children raised by gay men and lesbians are equally advantaged compared to those raised by heterosexuals (Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Patterson, 1995, 2000), gay-identified parents of this era faced a number of social, legal, and political obstacles that in many ways reinforced individuals' isolation from wider circles of support.

Common Obstacles and Responsive Strategies

The challenge of establishing, promoting, and sustaining new services within a population generally regarded as mentally ill, criminally disposed, or nonexistent manifested itself in a variety of obstacles. To some extent, acts of homophobic bias and intimidation exerted their influence as evidenced by accounts of police raids during routine business meetings (Ardery, 1971); refusal of seminary admission to a gay community services coordinator ("Lutheran Seminary," 1971); neighborhood petitions to prevent the opening of a gay substance abuse and ex-offender treatment center (Shilts, 1975b), and; arson ("Seattle Torched," 1976). However, the two most consistent obstacles involved the limited and often nonexistent availability of funding and the organizational instability and turmoil experienced by management and staff.

Limited and uncertain funding stands out as the most persistent barrier across virtually all of these emerging organizations. From the outset of organized gay and lesbian community services, private support from individual donors and
volunteers (often service recipients) helped to underwrite costs to secure, renovate, and maintain spaces; pay for rent and salaries; and cover the expenses for mailings, office supplies, and sometimes even medical supplies (Erickson, 1976; "Gay Community Center," 1971; "Liberation House," 1971; Lewis, 1975; Shilts, 1976c, 1976d). Limited operational support sometimes came from liberal religious foundations and local governments, but organizations struggled to offset their expenses once "seed" funding had run out ("Church Group," 1971; Erickson, 1976; Gay Community Services [Minneapolis] Board meeting minutes, May 20, 1975; "Liberation House," 1971; "News Briefs," 1975; "News Briefs," 1976). At Minneapolis' Gay Community Services for example, a sliding scale fee policy was crafted as an attempt to balance the organization's need to collect some nominal payment with clients' abilities to pay based on monthly income (Livingston-Cohen, 1975).

During this period, the issue of funding equity for gay taxpayers formed part of The Advocate's call for increased government support of gay and lesbian health and human services (Shilts, 1976b). In one commentary, editors pointed out that, "Gay people, most of whom are also single, can expect to see at least 32 percent less in real benefits from their tax dollars" ("Editorial: A Taxing Time," 1976, p. 14). This disparity especially irked gay venereal disease workers who witnessed disproportionate impact among their clients, yet faced the added difficulty of having to fundraise for services that heterosexuals were able to utilize for minimal additional costs (Shilts, 1976c). An Advocate editorial in 1972 observed,

To say that gay groups are sucking hind tit in the contributions department is putting it mildly. Most of them aren't getting any tit at all. Many gay groups—especially the gay social service organizations—can stretch a dollar further than anyone else we know. ("Editorials: Pride in Being," 1972)

Furthermore, if government funding proved elusive to secure, its arrival brought a more complex set of problems for these relatively young organizations. Washington, D.C.'s Gay Men's V. D. Clinic, heralded for gaining a $50,000 appropriation in early 1976, later had the money stripped by Congressional overseers who felt that gays could adequately access
treatment through existing mainstream services (Aiken, 1976; "V.D. Bucks," 1976). For L.A.'s Gay Community Services Center, the arrival of substantial government funding brought much-needed support for its venereal disease programs, but required significant additional support for administrative overhead, resulting in the dissolution of the agency's Liberation House programs and transsexual support services, and displacing office space for its prisoner, probation, and parole support services (Lewis, 1975). Seattle's Stonewall Human Growth Center, facing the loss of its NIAAA grant along with a slew of costly mandated facility repairs, opted to cease operations in mid-1976 ("Stonewall is Closing," 1976).

Funding issues inevitably overlapped with instability and turmoil among management and staff for many reasons, chief among them the rapid realization that far more need existed than capacity to address it. Within just a few years of the center's 1971 opening, Gay Community Service Center workers in Los Angeles, often unsure of whether they would be paid on time, reported providing services to approximately 7,500 gay men and lesbians annually through its venereal disease clinic; inpatient and outpatient alcohol and drug abuse programs; prison, probation, and parole services; interim housing; and its telephone switchboard (Shilts, 1976d; Stone, 1975). Managing its expanded operations would prove difficult, however, as the Center's initial overseers—many from the militant movements of the time—resisted traditional executive decision-making models and tried a number of approaches, including collective decision-making, team-based management, and eventually employment of a full-time Executive Director (Lewis, 1975; Shilts, 1976d). A Shilts-authored Advocate exposé in 1976 highlighted a number of operational concerns, including: mismanagement of payroll and occupancy costs that had arisen from the increased administrative burden; staff skepticism toward management's attempts to raise funds from wealthy private donors; accusations of "sexism, bossism, and racism" from workers who picketed in an attempt to oust senior management and board members; and public outcry regarding a nightclub's "slave auction" fundraiser intended to benefit several gay organizations, including the center (Shilts, 1976d).

These services' relationships with the larger gay and lesbian community, many members of which were small donors and
volunteers, were tested as well. Reporter Sasha Lewis' (1975) profile of L.A.’s Gay Community Service Center noted that perceptions of having “made it” when federal funds arrived meant that the private support needed to cover overhead costs began to shrink. Rivalries or turf wars between local gay and lesbian agencies were also noted in the staff newsletter of Minneapolis’ Gay Community Services (1975), with agencies struggling to differentiate how each performed distinct, unduplicated, and arguably essential functions that merited community support.

In response to these various crises, management and staff responded with as much resourcefulness as time, energy, and circumstances would permit. Employees’ efforts went beyond long working hours to include fundraising in the streets to pay the organization’s rent, collecting various in-kind donations (including carpeting, an air conditioner, a doorknob for the bathroom, and a working typewriter), and organizing staff potlucks to boost morale (Gay Community Services [Minneapolis] Staff Newsletter, May–June 1975; Shilts, 1976d; Stone, 1975). Archival material from Minneapolis’ Gay Community Services illustrate how staff sometimes used humor in meetings and newsletters to help each other cope with these frequent stressors, including brief asides such as, “Methodist Council investigating us and [Lesbian Resource Center] to see if we are promoting homosexuality (distasteful I’m sure);” “Nomination to Board (Sue Bonine)… Motion passed. Welcome to many headaches Sue;” and, “[W]ithout any more Gerald Ford rhetoric…” (Gay Community Services [Minneapolis], Board Meeting Minutes, May 20, 1975; Gay Community Services [Minneapolis] Staff Marathon, June 7–8, 1975, Staff Newsletter, May–June, 1975).

Discussion

Despite the American Psychiatric Association’s de-classification of homosexuality as a mental illness in 1973, the social sanction for openly associating with other gay and lesbian people continued to represent a powerful inhibitor in the 1970s. Many of these early community services simply ceased to exist, while those that survived did so despite extremely limited funding, bias from the larger community, and turnover
and conflict among workers and management. Organizations stayed afloat by soliciting private donations from individuals and foundations, renting out space for dances and other groups' meetings, charging nominal fees for services, and employing the efforts of motivated gay and lesbian volunteers (Kayal, 1994). Turmoil was not unfamiliar to these organizations and their constituents, as heated debates arose with respect to financial management, decision-making structures, and the equal representation of underserved voices.

The history of these efforts, although related to other more prominent post-Stonewall social movements, stands as both distinct and significant in light of the monumental challenges presented by widespread HIV infection among gay men—a medical crisis discovered in the early 1980s, but now recognized to have been present since the middle to late 1970s (Quan et al., 2002; Shilts, 1987). Political events in the intervening years would bring unprecedented attention to gay-identified urban centers, but the relative newness of these communities, the presence of social stigma and legal sanctions for intimate same-sex behaviors, and organized backlash from conservative opposition meant that gay and lesbian social services would continue to operate under conditions that would later become associated with AIDS service organizations (ASOs) in the 1980s (Mechanic & Aiken, 1989; Shilts, 1987). The outright refusal of mainstream clinics, hospitals, and nursing homes to accept AIDS patients gave rise to the ASO as a service provider. Much like their post-Stonewall forebears, ASOs would attempt to address a complex set of health and psychosocial needs that compounded the difficulty of treating patients' medical conditions (Kwait, Valente, & Celentano, 2001; Mechanic & Aiken, 1989).

Over the past thirty years, a number of studies have explored various facets of AIDS service delivery, including lessons learned from long-term care for chronic illness in other populations (Mechanic & Aiken, 1989); motivations for AIDS volunteerism (Omoto & Snyder, 1995); provider attitudes toward research-based prevention interventions (DiFranceisco et al., 1999); and the financial health of ASOs in the United States (Ferris, Pike, & Schaefer, 2007). Their findings, along with recommendations in the federal government's (Office of National AIDS Policy [ONAP], 2010) National HIV/AIDS...
Strategy for the United States, echo the context depicted in this paper with respect not only to the persistent health disparities impacting gay-identified populations but also the tenuous conditions in which newly-formed gay and lesbian organizations—facing high demand for services and limited public or private funds to operate—struggled to stay afloat.

The Advocate's content addressing these various health and human service issues provoked a variety of reader responses, especially Shilts' stories on alcoholism, venereal disease, and the turmoil experienced by L.A.'s Gay Community Service Center. While some letter writers took issue with how gay and lesbian health problems were presented (and reinforced negative stereotypes about homosexuals), the general theme of concern for fellow gays' and lesbians' health and well-being resonated with readers from different parts of the country (Austin, 1976; Boger, 1976; Brunt, 1976; Hewes, 1976; Hunter, 1976; J. T., 1976; Johnson, 1976; Merino & Richards, 1976; Rod M., 1976; Schwartz, 1976; Shaskey, 1976; Tuttle, 1976). An unscientific Advocate readers' poll in late 1974 revealed that while less than half of respondents had utilized gay and lesbian social services, wide majorities viewed the services both as necessary and trustworthy (“Advocate Poll,” 1974; “Gay Agencies,” 1974).

On a related note, frequent contributions on these topics stand out from freelance journalist Randy Shilts (now deceased), who would later author The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk (1982), the bestselling And The Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic (1987), and Conduct Unbecoming: Gays and Lesbians in the U.S. Military, Vietnam to the Persian Gulf (1993). Despite the limitation of relying on one author's viewpoint to represent a number of concerns from this period, Shilts' articles routinely cited multiple sources from across the U.S. to support his arguments, taking care to highlight the limitations of his data when presenting his conclusions. Further study of Shilts' life history and personal outlook would be useful for understanding his influence on gay and lesbian community health initiatives during this period.
Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to explore health and human service concerns that gay men and lesbians identified and attempted to address during the rise of post-Stonewall gay movements of the early to mid-1970s, prior to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s. An analysis of news and organizational content from this period illuminates the efforts of a community that was growing increasingly concerned with issues of social adjustment, chemical health, sexual health, and family supports while struggling with obstacles that included bias and intimidation, resistance and outright hostility from various governmental entities, limited funding, and turmoil among workers.

Although this analysis identifies concerns within a broader conceptualization of gay and lesbian identity, further research would be helpful to better understand the differential experiences of lesbian women, transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, bisexuals, communities of color, youth, and disabled gays and lesbians. Additional investigation would also help address the question of similarities or differences between gay and lesbian social services' formative experiences and comparable providers that emerged from the social movements of other marginalized U.S. populations. Despite these limitations, this article contributes to the larger understanding of sexual minority health issues by presenting preliminary evidence that for much of the decade prior to the discovery of AIDS, members of the gay and lesbian community recognized health and human service needs that uniquely impacted their peers due to sexual minority status, determined that addressing these problems could be done more effectively by individuals and organizations that shared the same sexual minority status, and, in the face of numerous obstacles, found resources to support their initial efforts.

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*Fear Itself,* an exhaustive political history of the New Deal [hereafter, ND] era has been much praised and deservedly so. Katznelson’s purpose is, among many related subtopics, to examine the meaning of the term “fear,” famously used in FDR’s phrase, “Nothing to fear but fear itself,” and the ways in which fear—from economic collapse domestically to threats from totalitarian governments abroad—influenced American political culture and political institutions in the 1930s and subsequently. And, while the term “New Deal” generally refers to domestic policy, Katznelson’s focus extends to foreign and “defense” policies. The book, organized in 4 parts of 3 chapters each plus an Epilogue, is far-ranging, insightful and provocative. It draws from extensive research with a Notes section of 172 pages.

Katznelson dates the ND era as extending from FDR’s inauguration to Eisenhower’s, and he describes the period as one that reflected “an unremitting sense of fragility” (p. 38), contrasting his interpretation to the common one that portrays it as triumphant. High unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation that threatened to destroy agriculture, labor unrest, and the rise of Fascist and Communist governments in Europe and Japan, followed at the end of WWII by the cold war and arms race with the USSR, all contributed to a continuing sense of dread.

Two major themes of the book are: (1) the nature of democracy in a time of fear associated with tension between the desire for a strong executive and the commitment to democratic principles that require an active legislature; and (2) the singular importance of Southern Democratic Congressmen to the ND project, Congressmen who were racists and whose
power rested on the continued exclusion and exploitation of Blacks. Thus, in the second chapter of Part I, Fight Against Fear, Katznelson details the surprising degree to which Italian fascism and to a lesser degree, Soviet communism—each based on dictatorial powers and seen as efficient ways to deal with economic crisis—had popular appeal in the U.S. Italo Balbo, an Italian Fascist aviator who made a 1933 whirlwind tour of several U.S. cities and was greeted by thousands, is paired with Theodore Bilbo, a U.S. Senator from Mississippi who is described as a populist champion of liberal New Deal programs and “the Senate’s most furious racist, a proud member of the Ku Klux Klan” (p. 83).

Part II, Southern Cage, examines in often gruesome detail the exclusion of and extensive, brutal attacks on African Americans in the South of the 1930s. While the Democrats held sway in Congress in a sometimes uneasy marriage between southerners who represented a region that was still predominantly agricultural and northerners who represented the industrial, urbanized part of the country, it was the southern faction, who held most of the important committee chairs, upon whom FDR relied. Thus, Katznelson challenges the generally held view that it was Northern progressives, responding to the growing labor movement and the mobilizing of the unemployed, who were the leaders in developing the alphabet programs that characterized ND domestic policy-making. Roosevelt was apparently quite comfortable with many southern Democratic leaders, and he remained aloof from supporting civil rights legislation, such as an anti-lynching bill introduced in 1934 (there were 28 lynchings in 1933, and 1,886 between 1900 and 1930, p. 141), because he needed southern Congressmen’s support for his legislative proposals and could not afford to alienate them. Since African Americans were universally excluded from voting, FDR had nothing to lose politically by ignoring their plight—and he did.

The South, still under-developed when the Depression hit, was a big beneficiary of ND programs, including among others the Tennessee Valley Authority, (segregated) CCC programs, and price supports under the Agricultural Adjustment Act that primarily benefited farmers with large holdings. And, while the administration and Congress responded to the demands of the increasingly powerful labor movement in the mid-1930s,
key statutes, including the Fair Labor Standards Act that established the minimum wage, the National Recovery Act, and the Social Security Act, were written so as to exclude from protection farm laborers and domestic workers, both composed primarily of Black workers. Thus, exploitation of African Americans upon whom the South's economy and Southern elites' profits and comforts depended would continue.

An important exploration in Fear Itself is the changing nature and balance of power between the nation's executive and legislative branches of government, especially focused on in Parts III, "Emergency, " and IV, "Democracy's Price." Katznelson concludes that, as concerns the responses to the economic crisis of the Depression and in contrast to Europe's dictatorships, democracy was maintained, and capitalism was "recast" through "a surge of statutes, not executive command" (p. 251).

The looming world war, its prosecution, and its aftermath were another matter. Katznelson analyzes in extensive detail Roosevelt's accretion of power as he sought to gain support for engaging the country in war and in its prosecution. Again, it was southern Democrats, desirous of selling cotton to England and, concomitantly, lowering tariffs, who were FDR's initial allies, while northern Republicans, preferring to protect their industrial base with tariffs, remained isolationist until Germany began its assault on England. The U.S. war effort was fought on a segregated basis, and southerners saw little contradiction in their continued racism and the Germans' treatment of the Jews. Japanese-Americans were interned, and the FBI, whose power and influence expanded greatly during this period, continuously scrutinized African Americans—particularly journalists—for disloyalty. Censorship was widely practiced.

Katznelson documents that Roosevelt made more extensive use of executive war powers than had any previous president. He devotes considerable attention to the development of atomic, later nuclear, weaponry, the secrecy that accompanied it, and the overwhelming tensions of the Cold War and its related Red Scare (this after FDR's having made pacts with the USSR to fight Nazi Germany). The result was more generalized fear and the advent of the surveillance state that presaged what the U.S. has become today.
Returning to an examination of domestic policy in the post-War period, Katznelson details the Congressional attack on organized labor that was fashioned to, among other things, deter labor organizing by African Americans as industry moved South. Ultimately, the Democratic Party’s uneasy North-South marriage ended with the Civil Rights movement and the realignment of the political parties.

Concluding with a discussion of the nature of contemporary American democracy, a democracy that was born in the ND and the post-War period that gave rise to an expansionist foreign policy that has too often supported harsh dictatorial governments, Katznelson employs the image of Janus to describe a two-faced arrangement whereby a procedural democracy exists in the domestic sphere while a covert undemocratic foreign policy goes unchallenged. This two-sided state, a state characterized by democratic advantages yet marked by antidemocratic pathologies, continues to constitute the world Americans inhabit. This, ultimately, is the legacy of the New Deal’s southern cage (p. 485).

Fear Itself examines an enormity of important topics that have only been suggested in this review. It uncovers important cultural and historical bases of the American polity that deserve the attention of any academic who is interested in understanding aspects of recent U.S. history that have previously remained unexplored.

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The intense stresses on Americans as a result of long hours of labor have been a prominent theme in recent sociological work, such as Juliet Schor’s Overworked American, Arlie Hochcshild’s The Time Bind, and The Time Divide by Jerry Jacobs and Kathleen Gerson. Rather than a future of leisure and widespread prosperity, “time famine” exists amid inequitably distributed material excess. Long hours of work in the pursuit of endless GDP growth are widely seen to be the only realistic economic option. Benjamin Kline Hunnicutt’s Free Time: The
Forgotten American Dream puts the current situation in a broad historical context, drawing attention to the centrality of the progressive reduction of the hours of work in earlier formulations of the American Dream.

Hunnicutt aims to "re-present that traditional American Dream" and to challenge the idea that it has become unrealistic. He documents the wide range of American advocates of Higher Progress, from Walt Whitman to labor radicals, who pointed to a realm of freedom beyond the marketplace and its focus on getting and spending. Others, including many educators and architect Frank Lloyd Wright, prepared their fields for the coming age of leisure-based freedom. The goal of freeing up time from "wage slavery" so that workers could cultivate their minds, participate in democratic life and convivial communities, and regain control over their lives was widely shared. Indeed, these dreams made major inroads in the 19th and early 20th centuries with the introduction of the ten-hour day, and later the eight-hour day and 40-hour week. Hunnicutt pinpoints the shorter-hours movement's high point as 1933, when a 30-hour workweek bill, approved by the Senate, was on the verge of becoming law.

An additional aim of Free Time, building on Hunnicutt's earlier Work Without End and Kellogg's Six-Hour Day, is to explain why the work-time reduction movement faltered. He documents the pushback from many in business, who saw a threat to a growth-based capitalism in which they occupied a central position and, by the 1930s, stepped up promotion of a "new economic gospel of consumption." Hunnicutt calls into question the progressive legacy of FDR, who played a key role in stopping the shorter-hours momentum, offering the alternative of perpetual economic growth and full-time (i.e., 40 hours), full employment. The perceived imperative of winning the Cold War arms race later became an additional argument to favor expanded production over shorter hours. Hunnicutt also emphasizes the post-war labor leadership's loss of commitment to shorter hours and conversion to the "need-to-consume-to-create-jobs logic." While work was increasingly glorified, leisure was trivialized and feminized, as male employees came to see a less-than-40-hour schedule as something for women. In the face of these trends, Hunnicutt also points to contemporary holdouts who continue to push for shorter hours.
Free Time is an impressive account of evolving thought about work, leisure, and progress in American history. It succeeds admirably in showing how prominent the shorter-hours vision was and provides many of the answers as to why that vision faded. Hunnicutt is thorough in documenting the various voices calling for Higher Progress through expanded leisure (perhaps too thorough in places, where there is repetition of a broadly similar vision by many individuals). One limitation is that the book sidesteps the additional obstacles to a shorter-hours vision created by growing inequality and the shift in relative power from labor to business since the 1970s. Many workers have been getting neither increased material consumption nor shorter hours, and face a greater struggle to keep up with the ever-upscaling consumption standards of the rich.

In his conclusion, Hunnicutt makes clear that he is not only an academic observer, but an advocate of shorter hours and a vision of Higher Progress as an alternative to the “current dream of eternal consumption, wealth, and work that now threatens human communities and the natural world.” While the forces opposing this vision are powerful, in light of growing climate instability and other signs of the environmental limits to consumption growth, Hunnicutt’s plea to revive the forgotten American Dream deserves a wide hearing.

Anders Hayden, Department of Political Science, Dalhousie University


Research into social work and social policy in different countries around the world has expanded exponentially over the last 20 years. Many more publications on international social welfare are now available, and they provide important insights into the way societies around the world seek to promote social well-being. Initially, international scholarship focused narrowly on government welfare, but its scope has now been expanded to include nonprofit organizations, community development programs, “nonformal” social welfare
and professional social work. However, the literature tends to compartmentalize these different fields, providing only partial insights into social welfare practices and institutions. It is a major strength of this book that its contributors provide a broad overview of social welfare in the East Asian and Pacific region that encompasses government policies and programs, nonprofits, and traditional practices, as well as professional social work.

The book was compiled for social work students at Brigham-Young University in Hawaii with the express purpose of providing them with information about social welfare in the East Asia and Pacific region. Many of these students come from the countries discussed in the book, and most of the chapters are written by social work academics and practitioners from the region. The book's chapters deal with Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Micronesia, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand and Samoa. The editor provides a useful introductory overview of social welfare in these countries, and she concludes the book with an interesting discussion of several key themes raised in the different chapters. Generally, the chapters follow a standard format and sequentially discuss the historical background to social welfare in each country, prevailing social problems, the major population groups served, the role of social work as a profession and social work education. Some of the chapters also speculate about the future direction of social welfare, and a few contain recommendations for improving social welfare services. Although most of the chapters are descriptive, they raise interesting questions. They also provide useful insights into the nature of social welfare in different East Asian and Pacific nations.

Although some countries, such as Japan and the Philippines, are noticeably absent, the book includes countries that are seldom covered in the literature. For example, there are interesting chapters on Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, which are sizeable and rapidly developing countries, as well as smaller nations, such as Micronesia and Samoa. While social welfare in some of the countries, such as China and Korea, is now well documented, little is known about developments in the other countries. The chapter on Cambodia is particularly helpful. Although there are major differences in the region's welfare systems, they share common experiences. They also
face similar challenges such as poverty, population aging, child neglect and substance abuse, as well as under researched issues such as migration, trafficking and the oppression of minority groups.

In her concluding chapter, the editor reviews these challenges, as well as issues that are not always given adequate attention in the international social welfare literature. They include the impact of colonialism on social welfare, the role of the traditional culture and values in shaping family and community interventions, and the relationship between social welfare in the region and the wider world. The editor is to be commended on covering a range of topics in a succinct and readable way. Of particular interest is the way social work is evolving within the region. Although there is a clear tendency towards professionalization and standardization, the need for cultural appropriateness is also recognized. However, it is not clear that social work’s clients in the region are best served by adopting a standardized practice approach based on direct intervention. The editor and some of the contributors are sensitive to this issue, but it remains to be seen whether social workers in the region will forge unique practice approaches that can inform the profession in other parts of the world.

The book is a useful reference guide to social welfare in East Asia and Pacific nations which will be particularly useful to social work researchers and practitioners engaged in collaborative projects in these countries. By documenting current services, it is also a useful resource to academic researchers seeking to obtain more information about social welfare institutions in different parts of the world. As noted earlier, one of its strengths is its broad encompassing view of social welfare that transcends a narrow focus on statutory social services and professional social work. By broadening its conception of social welfare, the editor and contributors may help to foster a greater awareness of social welfare’s multidimensional features and promote a broader perspective that enhances understanding of how different nations promote social well-being.

James Midgley, School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley

Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States, comprising close to 17% of the population, as documented by the 2010 Census. This population is projected to continue to grow rapidly, reaching at least 30% by 2050; 40% of California's population is already Latino. Although the Latino population is varied in terms of national origin and ancestry, the majority (fully 63%) of Latinos can be categorized as Mexican American, an ethnic group that continues to grow due to both immigration from Mexico and higher than average birth rates.

Much has been written about various aspects of the Mexican American experience in the United States, and this academic literature includes a variety of theoretical perspectives and disciplines in both the social sciences and humanities, among others, such as public health and business. The majority of this literature, however, tends to focus on working class Mexican Americans/Chicanos and Mexican immigrants, perhaps not unjustifiably given the political turmoil around the issue of immigration and the fact that a large percentage of the Mexican American population lives in poverty. For example, according to the 2010 Census, almost one in four (24.2%) Mexican American families lived in poverty, compared to 11.3% for the general population.

A relatively small percentage, both within group and in comparison to other groups, of Mexican Americans can be classified as middle class. For example, less than 10% of Mexican Americans have completed a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 30% of the White population, 16% of Blacks, and 48% of Asian Americans. However, given the projected growth of the overall Mexican American population, the Mexican American middle class is likely to grow rapidly as well. And this is where the book under review comes in; Vallejo, its author, states:

The objective of this book is to examine the mobility paths, lived experiences, and incorporation outcomes [assimilation] of today's Mexican American middle
class in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this population and a more promising outlook for the future. (p. 2)

She defines middle class status sociologically on the basis of four characteristics: college education; total household income over the national median; white-collar employment or business ownership; and homeownership.

Data for this book were gathered by the author in the greater Los Angeles, California region, using field methods that included 75 in-depth structured interviews, participant observation, and an ethnography of a Latina business association over a three-year period. Basically, the research was conducted for the Vallejo’s dissertation and the book is based on the dissertation.

So, what did Vallejo find? Basically, that Mexican Americans are achieving upward mobility, albeit at a very slow pace, and that they are incorporating into the middle class. This mobility is achieved through various pathways, including via the traditional assimilation model (cutting most ties with ethnic community) and via the minority culture framework (which includes retaining ties to working-class and ethnic origins). Vallejo also finds that those individuals who reached the middle class via the minority culture pathway are much more likely to retain ties to their working class and ethnic communities, financially and in other ways support poorer family members, and act as language and cultural brokers for relatives. In sum, they are more likely to “give back.”

The book’s main weakness is that it is written exclusively as an academic study and thus it will have a very limited readership (race/ethnic and class scholars). However, the book’s strengths far exceed this limitation. It’s an interesting book, with an interesting focus, and interesting findings. The book makes a contribution to our understanding of the Mexican American middle class where there is a dearth of literature. My hope is that this book will spur much more research on the Mexican American middle class, including research that compares the Mexican American middle class to the middle classes of other ethnic groups. While Vallejo makes an important contribution in this area, the research on the Mexican American
middle class has just begun; we have much to learn yet about this category of the Mexican American population.

Celestino Fernández, Dept. of Sociology, University of Arizona


In *Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India*, Rina Agarwala challenges assumptions about the ability of informal workers to organize and pessimism about the prospects for workers' organizing under neoliberalism and global capitalism that are characterized by precarious employment and shrinking prospects for the welfare state. This is an exciting book that describes successes of informal worker demands in India where workers have used strategies that target the state rather than the employer in the context of economic liberalization—the term used by Agarwala to capture privatization and the shift to forms of production that rely on flexible informal employment—and where seek to “dignify” the workforce through citizenship demands.

Her study of organized informal workers in the bidi (hand-rolled cigarettes) and construction industries begins by considering several phenomena: that informal workers are organized in India—at levels on par with workers in the formal sector (union density rates are roughly equal among formal and informal workers in the 4 states represented in this study), and that these organizations have won significant demands for social welfare benefits from the state. However, organizations of informal workers have not been uniformly successful, and the central question Agarwala examines is what conditions at the state level have been conducive to the success of these organizations.

This well researched and tightly argued book is based on 200 interviews with government officials, employers, and labor leaders of formal and informal workers organizations, and 140 interviews with members of informal workers organizations in 4 Indian States (Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Kerala). Agarwala employs several devices that make
her complex argument easy to follow. In her opening chapter, Agarwala presents her questions as "puzzles" that encompass interlocking factors that frame labor, state-labor, and state conditions, and then uses her research material to return to these questions, specifically in the concluding chapter, to comment on class formation among informal workers, state labor relations under liberalization and globalization, and the political context that supports effective organizing. She also presents an empirically derived 2 X 2 table to illustrate a fourfold ideal typology that represents characteristics that vary among states and are associated with successful campaigns by informal workers. The two variables Agarwala considers are the presence of competitive popular elections involving pro-poor political candidates, in which informal workers can provide access to blocks of votes, and states undergoing liberalization strategies that rely on a compliant informal workforce that can be aided by cooperative informal workers organizations. Agarwala uses her typology to evaluate social movement successes and failures among the states. Tamil Nadu—liberalizing with pro-poor political leadership in competitive elections—and Kerala—not liberalizing, but with pro-poor political leadership—have had highly successful campaigns. Somewhat successful informal worker organizing efforts have taken place in Mahrastra—lacking pro-poor leadership but engaged at liberalization on the state level. The least successful campaigns have taken place in West Bengal—interestingly lacking pro-poor competitive leadership, despite a long history of Communist leadership and not liberalizing.

One small weakness of the book is its scant attention to workplace conditions. Though work-related health and safety are mentioned sporadically throughout the book, more deliberate framing of critical health and safety threats for informal workers (toxic exposures in the home that also impact children and family members, environmental waste, building collapses and fires, workplace stress under lean production demands) could highlight the limits of the contradictory state politics that both protect worker welfare and employment forms that rely on deregulation.

Agarwala is careful to point out that the successes she describes are not a normative argument that "the new form of unionism is better than the conventional form," since its
"spotty implementation and non-universalist reach undermine the structural changes necessary to eradicate social injustices" and "welfare demands are not a perfect substitute for worker demands" (p. 196). However, as she qualifies:

...at the moment, however, India's informal workers are attaining more success by mobilizing members and attaining state attention based on their welfare demands. We must remember that conventional approaches, although more ambitious, had failed to protect the vast majority of informal workers. To this extent, new informal workers movements warrant our attention. (p.196)

Nonetheless, the gains Agarwala describes are an antidote to common "mourning" about neoliberalism. In particular, the struggle of informal women workers to meet reproductive (health, retirement, education) needs suggests that bringing work into the home can politicize the needs of the home; and the success of the labor-welfare strategy that Agarwala describes results in expanding the welfare state during a period of contraction in Western developed countries that has been characterized by demands for austerity and continued stigma of benefits and beneficiaries will stand out to many Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare readers. For those interested in the possibilities for social unionism, development centered on empowered poor women, and organizing for a responsive welfare state, this book is a must read.

Jennifer R. Zelnick  
Touro College Graduate School of Social Work


Ever since Eliot Liebow's ethnographic classic Tally's Corner (1967), researchers, practitioners, and policy makers have—from time to time—tried to understand the experience of low-income men living in the inner-city. Much of the public opinion surrounding these men—especially as they take on the father
role—has been negative: poor fathers have typically been seen as “deadbeat dads” who do not care about their children. But is this really true? It is thus that we come to the extremely important work of Kathryn Edin and Timothy Nelson’s Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City. Kathryn Edin, long a well-respected researcher devoted to understanding inner city family life, continues in the strong ethnographic tradition of Liebow while also taking things one huge step further. In this book, she and Nelson do extensive interviews with 110 poor fathers in two cities, Camden and Philadelphia, over seven years. They take a clearly relational approach to their work—both in the in-depth nature of their interviews with these fathers, and in the fact that they actually move into one of these inner-city neighborhoods themselves to live alongside these men and really understand their lives. This ethnographic approach represents research at its very best.

Edin and Nelson begin their work by noting that “conventional wisdom” tends to blame poor outcomes for inner-city children on their often absent fathers, who are generally seen as uncaring. They wondered if this was true. This, in turn, led to a broader research question: what does fatherhood really mean in the lives of low-income inner city men? The authors begin by looking at how these men and women come together and find that news of a pregnancy is typically met with overwhelming joy. Fathers talk about how having a child gives them something to live for, it helps them feel that they have accomplished something, and it also helps them feel less alone. Living in a poor neighborhood where they have not had many opportunities to feel good about themselves, this is a moment when they really do, and they savor it.

But, once the baby is born, things start getting complicated. Bonds to the mother often start to weaken, while bonds to the children often prevail, as these men speak over and over again of how they want to be committed and responsible fathers. They talk of the father ideal of being a good provider and role model. Although many realize they cannot fully provide financially for their children, they feel they are nevertheless “doing the best they can” as they take on the father role. They also and importantly do some redefining of this role, turning to the “softer side” of love, communication, and quality time. These
are things that poor men, despite economic realities, can do for their children.

These findings lead the authors to describe a "new package deal" where these men, unlike fathers of a different time, prioritize the relationship with their child over that with the mother. They also redefine what it means to be a good father, putting the relational aspects of fatherhood right alongside the financial aspects. Although some try to be good fathers and fail, the authors see strength in many of the fathers they have interviewed. They say that "what is most surprising about our story" is indeed how many of these inner-city men are eager to embrace the father role and have found some way to do so.

Not that this way is always ideal. These fathers often end up performing tasks more consistent with that of a favorite uncle: being present when they can, paying as much as they can, and especially valuing quality time. But they are generally not equal partners in parenting. Furthermore, if there are multiple children involved, which is often the case, they are more likely to dote on their youngest child, a behavior that provides a focus and a chance to feel like a success as a father.

These may not be ideal ways of being a father, but they are ways of being there. Edin and Nelson close their book on a policy note, arguing that society "must find a way to honor fathers' attempts to build relationships with their children," as many are indeed doing the best they can.

This is an absolutely wonderful book: very well-written, richly textured with the life stories and the men's actual voices, and presenting in-depth interview data and analysis. Two things really stand out as one reads the book. First of all, Edin and Nelson firmly root their work in the context of neighborhood poverty—it is in this difficult environment that these men were raised and in which they try to take on the father role. And secondly, the authors take a solidly relational approach to their work, carefully listening to the voices of an often marginalized group of men, living among them, and understanding how it is in relationship itself—specifically that of a father and his child—that a poor life can come to have some meaning.

*Helen Glikman, School of Social Work, Salem State University*

The wonderful cover of the hardback edition of *Plutocrats* shows an early morning suburban scene in 21st century America: a young mother is walking little Johnny to the private jet, parked in their driveway, that will whisk him off to private school. Chrystia Freeland offers an unusual perspective on the massive growth of inequality in recent decades. Rather than focusing her attention on the losers, this veteran financial journalist gives us a close look at the global super-rich of this new Gilded Age—not the 1 percent, but the .01 percent. Her portraits and interviews are insightful, tough, and fair, but their implications for global political economy are alarming.

Freeland does not condemn the new super-rich, portraying them in all their complicated glory: very smart, hard working, and well-meaning, but also self-absorbed, self-justifying, and lacking empathy. In 2012, Mitt Romney's disdainful comments about the 47 percent of Americans who allegedly didn't pay federal income taxes provided a disturbing glimpse into a certain mindset. In this view, there are two groups of Americans: the industrious "makers," or job creators, and the lazy "takers," relying upon government handouts. In Freeland's account, the new global plutocrats in technology, finance, and other industries believe they hold the keys to a better future for all of us—as long as their innovations are not stifled by regulations or taxes and their efforts are amply rewarded, no questions asked. She wryly notes psychologist Dan Ariely's findings that individuals tend to believe that what is good for them personally is, surprisingly enough, right and just for the society.

The acceleration of globalization, the rise of free-market ideology, the spread of information and communications technologies, and the financialization of the global economy have led to weaker unions, lower taxes, reduced regulation, the offshoring of jobs to developing countries, and, of course, much greater economic inequality. Winner-take-all markets have developed across many industries, from professional sports to investment banking, expanding the ranks of the rich and super-rich across the globe. The benefits and costs of the
new high-octane capitalism are, as always, unequally distributed. In the United States, average wages and median family incomes have been declining for decades. At the same time, robust economic growth in China and India has pulled hundreds of millions out of extreme poverty.

Freeland argues that the global super-rich today are not, as in the past, mostly those who inherited their wealth, but are instead very talented individuals with immense drive. For their efforts, they have been rewarded with fantastic riches. She doesn’t so much question the rewards themselves as much as their impact on political economy. The extreme wealth generated in such industries as energy and finance enables lobbyists to buy disproportionate influence over the political and regulatory systems of many nations, not least in the United States. In Russia, China, Mexico, and other emerging nations, a spate of new billionaires has emerged out of close and corrupt relationships with the ruling party or government, granting them state-protected monopolies in lucrative industries.

Economist Willem Buiter tells Freeland that an even more insidious process of rent-seeking is “cognitive state capture,” which is less about bribes and blackmail than the manufacture of a perceived identity of interests and values between regulators and industry. For example, decisions by the Federal Reserve or the SEC seem to cater more to Wall Street than to Main Street. The result of all this is weak regulation, the expansion of corporate subsidies, and a persistent pressure to reduce taxes for corporations and the rich. The social consequences include the collapse of the middle class in the United States, a shift in wealth and power from labor to capital, and the appropriation of almost all the gains of economic growth by the very rich.

Can we go on like this? No. In her concluding chapter, Freeland highlights the somber warning of Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson in Why Nations Fail. Surveying global history, they found that city-states, nations, and empires thrive when their elites create inclusive institutions that share the fruits of economic progress. But over time, greedy elites often rig the political and economic system to enrich themselves and perpetuate their power. This process closes off opportunities for new blood and new ideas, undermines the system’s legitimacy, and leads to eventual collapse. Freeland argues that,
unless they are stopped, today's plutocrats in the U.S., Russia, and other nations will blithely lead us down this unfortunate path. The rest of us must take collective action to reign in their growing dominance of politics and government.

*Plutocrats* is a highly readable work of journalism, not social science. Nevertheless, it offers invaluable insights on global political economy for students, faculty, and the interested public.

Edward U. Murphy, Department of Global Studies and International Affairs, Northeastern University
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