

Charity, Therapy and Poverty: Private Social Service in the Era of Public Welfare

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ABSTRACT:

Charities and non-profit agencies have played a vital role in the expansion of the public welfare state in the United States during the twentieth century. While most historical work on the expansion of the welfare state, particularly post-World War Two, has focused on public-sector institutions, this dissertation draws in the study of non-profit agencies as central actors in the expansion and evolution of welfare policy and practice. It analyzes the transformation of American charity, from institutions that at times opposed the expansion of public welfare, to ones that promoted, defended, and depended on public welfare. Rather than seeing voluntary-state relationships as zero-sum, many nonprofits realized that the expansion of the postwar welfare state would be instrumental to the vitality of their own organizations.

This dissertation traces the evolution of charitable institutions known in the 1920s as “Associated Charities” or “Family Societies” to organizations known in the postwar era as “Family Service” agencies. This transformation encompassed their shift from dispensing material assistance to dispensing social services. Even prior to the Depression, such agencies had begun to see the limits of the voluntary sector and to argue for a more robust public welfare state. The New Deal made that a reality, and private agencies, which could no longer compete financially with the state, began to emphasize meeting new needs. After the war, their professional social workers increasingly provided family and marital counseling. This dissertation pays particular attention to this development at the local level, in St. Paul, Minnesota, Baltimore, Maryland, and Wilmington, Delaware.

To maintain their focus on emotional, rather than financial, needs, family service agencies became defenders of a new public-private welfare regime that left material

assistance in the hands of the public sector, and carved a niche for inter-personal, “intangible” assistance in the private sector. Moderate and conservative local elites—as boards of directors of such agencies—came to see the value of maintaining public assistance. They also helped promote the legitimacy of social services as effective tools in meeting social problems. Though they defended welfare, voluntary agencies promoted an emerging method of therapeutic helping that stressed their historic commitment to solving problems at the level of the individual.

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INTRODUCTION

As the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt neared the end of its first year in office in 1934, Linton Swift, general secretary of the Family Welfare Association of America and a leading spokesman for social work in the United States, wrote, “there is now a general recognition of the primary responsibility of local, state and national government for the relief of unemployment and similar types of need....” Swift’s position on the function of government was noteworthy. He was the spokesman for over two hundred local voluntary social welfare agencies, and his organization had been at the forefront of debates on the division of responsibility between public and private institutions for decades. “Family agencies,” as the members of the FWAA were loosely known, had been the sparkling example of the possibilities of professionalized social welfare in the 1920s. They were voluntary institutions, directed by local elites, run by professional social workers, and advertised as the most prominent element of local social safety nets. In years past, many people associated with them had spoken disdainfully of the capabilities of the public sector, and on occasion, actively worked to forestall the expansion of public welfare. In the 1930s, however, they were shaken and tattered by several years of the most severe economic dislocation they had ever faced, and had been urging a greater public responsibility for the monetary needs of citizens. As for the role of the voluntary sector, Swift said, it will “meet human needs not yet recognized by a majority of the public as vital or meriting community support.”¹

¹ Linton Swift, *New Alignments Between Public and Private Agencies in a Community Family Welfare and Relief Program* (New York: Family Welfare Association of America, 1934), p. 2, 12.

By 1950, Leonard Mayo, a prominent social work educator, argued that strong programs of public and private service would necessarily co-exist. “In every locality where voluntary agencies hold up the hands of the governmental agencies and where the latter use and lean on strong voluntary agencies,” Mayo argued, “the whole community is conscious of a rounded program dedicated to the public in which each group of agencies supplements and complements each other.” Mayo made his claim in the midst of a period of widespread criticism of public assistance programs, and placed voluntarism in defense of welfare. Charity now depended on welfare to carry the substantial burden of financial relief. For the family agencies that Swift had represented, their service now lay in helping people with problems such as “marital adjustment, strained parent-child relationships, physical and mental illness, unmarried parenthood, and economic difficulties,” as the Family Service of Northern Delaware did in 1961. Such service could only be offered in the context of a wider welfare state that relieved charity of the responsibility of welfare.²

In 1970, Elizabeth Wickenden noted the passing of the hard-won consensus on a “new alignments” of public and private, of which Swift had written and which Mayo had observed in the postwar period. Wickenden’s career had spanned the entire length of this era of new alignments; she had started public service in the 1930s in the federal government, but had made a career serving as a liaison between the public and private social welfare establishments. In the wake of the 1967 amendments to the Social Security Act that permitted the federal government to use non-profit agencies to deliver public services, she observed that “Virtually unchallenged and undebated, the principle

² Leonard Mayo, “Who’s to Pay for Social Work?”, *Survey* (Feb. 1950), p. 59; Minutes, Annual Meeting, Family Service of Northern Delaware, Mar. 21, 1961, Children and Families First Library, Wilmington, De.

established with the first large-scale federal welfare program, the Federal Emergency Welfare Administration [sic], that public funds should only be expended by public agencies, was quietly repudiated.”³ The purchase of services by the government from voluntary agencies, she feared, would undermine the legitimacy and proper function of both private and public. It would certainly spell the end of the New Deal consensus on the primacy of the public sector for meeting broad social needs.

This dissertation explores the history of a particular set of voluntary social service agencies as they variously promoted and coped with the expansion of the public welfare state in the United States during the mid-twentieth century. Such institutions, in their incarnations as “Associated Charities” in the early 1900s were often a primary source of “outdoor relief” for the poor in many medium and large cities. By the late 1950s, most had become “Family Service” agencies, focused on providing counseling services for individuals and families facing varied crises. Throughout, they had depended primarily on the talents of social workers to provide alms, and later, therapy. Social workers in turn depended on “case work,” the central philosophy and skill of social work—that meeting people’s problems meant a sustained attention to them as individuals, whether it was investigating their particular economic needs, or engaging them in a relationship that offered support and insight into their problems. Family service agencies were at the pinnacle of this professional practice, with a close relationship to schools of social work, and were a bellwether of the evolution of the field. Their shift away from “relief”, that began even prior to the Depression, is in part a story of how what some scholars have

³ Elizabeth Wickenden, “Purchase of Care and Services: Effect on Voluntary Agencies,” in Iris Winogrand, ed. *Purchase of Care and Services in the Health and Welfare Fields* (Milwaukee: School of Social Welfare, University of Wisconsin, 1970), p. 42.

called a “welfare regime” expanded in the twentieth century to include a variety of social services, many of which were offered in non-profit agencies not formally linked to the state.⁴

The role of nonprofit agencies such as the members of the Family Welfare Association of America—renamed the Family Service Association of America in 1946 is an under-examined element in the burgeoning historical study of the “mixed,” public-private welfare regime of the United States in the mid-twentieth century. Such work centers on health insurance and pensions, policy arenas that were contested by government, employers, labor, private insurance companies, and so on.⁵ These studies have demonstrated that the elements of the mixed welfare state depended on each other—pensions offered through companies, for instance, were usually structured to supplement Social Security retirement benefits. The mixed welfare state takes on a decidedly different cast as one moves through other areas of social policy. In the social services, non-profit agencies, and prior to the 1960s, particularly those with a “charitable” heritage, are the dominant non-governmental actor, and merit specific attention as a distinct institutional form with a far different historical legacy than those actors involved in negotiating and fighting over pensions or health care. Such agencies helped build local legitimacy for the most stigmatized element of the welfare state: public

⁴ I draw the phrase from Jacob Hacker, who in turn had modified it from Gøsta Esping-Andersen; see Hacker, “The Divided Welfare State: The Battle Over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States,” University of Virginia Twentieth Century Seminar, Fall 2001 (from his forthcoming *The Divided Welfare State*, Cambridge University Press); and Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)

⁵ Hacker; Jennifer Klein, “Managing Security: The Business of American Social Policy, 1910s-1960” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1999); Michael B. Katz, *The Price of Citizenship: Redefining the American Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001), ch. 6, 7; Marie Gottschalk, *The Shadow Welfare State: Labor, Business, and the Politics of Health Care in the United States* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2000); Sanford Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

assistance, both Aid to Dependent Children and local general assistance programs.

Scholars trying to explain the persistence and travails of public assistance have pointed to systemic “regulation” of the poor, to race, and to gender.⁶ But rarely do these studies enter the situation on the local or state level, save for points of extreme crisis, where the politics of public assistance, the most decentralized element of the welfare state, reveals the hidden constituency of welfare: nonprofit agencies, whose existence depended on the public sector’s assumption of responsibility for a often rudimentary social safety net. Such agencies were reluctantly politicized. Their vision of welfare was narrow. But their support, and the support of moderate members of local elites who made up their boards of directors, was critical in maintaining public assistance as a basic element of local welfare regimes.

Similarly, the role of voluntary organizations in particular has been obscured by a conventional historical narrative of social welfare that posits the end of charity in the New Deal and that has virtually erased the role of voluntary organizations in the postwar “New Deal Order.” The rich world of voluntary organizations where many scholars have found the origins of public welfare in the Progressive era have been abandoned in order to trace the rise of the welfare state. Voluntarism has been largely yoked to the failed efforts of the Hoover Administration to deal with the Depression, and the vivid failures of fraternal organizations and other ethnic self-help groups so richly described in Lizabeth Cohen’s *Making a New Deal*. The drama of that shift can be found in relief statistics during the course of the Depression. A study of 116 major cities showed the percentage

⁶ For influential examples of each, see Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1993); Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995); Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

of relief accounted for by private funds dropped from 24 percent in 1929 to about one percent in 1939.⁷ The extremity of the failure of voluntarism and the rapidity of the shift to a publicly dominated public assistance system has led most historians to follow the money, and treat the voluntary sector thereafter as an aside.⁸

Such sketches understate the continuing connection between voluntarism, the poor, and the welfare state. Through the end of the Depression, despite the intervention of the state, many voluntary agencies not only survived but remained deeply involved in the administration and distribution of relief. While provision of direct relief played a diminishing role in the programs of private agencies, it would be years before it was insignificant, and it was embedded in the experience of its social workers and the charitable outlook of their boards. It would longer still before the link between private case work agencies and charity was erased in the eyes of potential clients.⁹ This

⁷ Josephine Brown, *Public Relief, 1929-1939* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1940), p. 415.

⁸ Andrew J. Polsky, *The Rise of the Therapeutic State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991): 157; For illustrations of how postwar private agencies have been treated as diverging from welfare concerns, see Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 269; James Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1985* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986): 88-89; Walter Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America* (New York: Free Press, 1994): 307-308; Stanley Wenocur and Michael Reisch, *From Charity to Enterprise: The Development of American Social Work in a Market Economy* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989): 214-219. Other works deal briefly with private agencies and social services in 1960s, but largely ignore them in the 1940s and 1950s. John H. Ehrenreich, *The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985): 139-157. Daniel J. Walkowitz, though focused on questions of class identity, nonetheless gives a rich treatment of the internal workings of case work agencies, both public and private, in New York in the postwar era. See Walkowitz, *Working With Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle Class Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). David Beito, studying voluntary fraternal mutual aid associations, argues for their persistence, not collapse, through the Depression, though he does not devote much time to examining their post-World War Two evolution. David Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Ken Cmiel, *A Home of Another Kind: One Chicago Orphanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), provides a fascinating example of how one voluntary institution evolved with shifts in public policy during the twentieth century.

⁹ Richard A. Cloward and Irwin Epstein, "Private Social Welfare's Disengagement from the Poor: The Case of Family Adjustment Agencies," In *Proceedings of the Annual Social Work Day Institute* (Buffalo: State

dissertation will examine in particular how voluntary agencies strove to “sell” themselves as providers of professional help—though what precise form that help would take, and who it would help, proved a constant dilemma for most of the institutions in this study. The move from “relief” to “service” was not as direct or smooth as those historians who have commented on the process would have us believe. It required a strenuous redefinition of what “charity” would mean in a welfare state.

The Therapeutic

One of the avenues of expansion proved to be an emphasis on the therapeutic dimensions in the practice of social work. Family agencies found a niche as part of a broad expansion of therapeutic resources in American communities in the post-World War Two era. Such resources, lodged in institutions such as Veteran’s Administration hospitals, outpatient psychiatric clinics, child guidance clinics, and family agencies, were loosely affiliated in what I have termed “therapeutic networks,” that embraced psychologically oriented approaches to dealing with a host of social problems in the postwar era.¹⁰ While many scholars have identified the pervasiveness of a therapeutic ethos in the twentieth-century United States, early discussions of “the therapeutic” tended to reside at the level of intellectual history or cultural criticism of a consumerist,

University of New York at Buffalo, School of Social Welfare, 1965); James Patterson, *America’s Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1985* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986): 88-89.

¹⁰ Here I draw on Julian Zelizer’s discussion of policy communities, though in comparison to his “tax community,” therapeutic networks were more diffuse and less explicitly aimed at the policy-making process. Julian E. Zelizer, *Taxing America: Wilbur D. Mills, Congress, and the State, 1945-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 8-11. Andrew Polsky locates “service networks” constituted by “normalizing agencies” built up around mother’s pension programs in the Progressive era. I argue that the postwar period reinvigorated and expanded such networks, and the widened availability of professional therapeutic expertise made them more explicitly “therapeutic.” Andrew J. Polsky, *The Rise of the Therapeutic State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 79.

narcissistic moral climate: a therapeutic ethos “rises” or grows with few indications of the mechanics of that growth.¹¹ More recent studies have shown how therapeutically based solutions to social problems were nurtured in an institutional nexus that emerged from deeper material, cultural and political changes.¹² Andrew Polsky’s work has shown how professionals within public agencies such as the juvenile courts and child welfare services, and to a lesser degree public welfare, attempted to build a “therapeutic state”—in his view, to the detriment of the clientele they served. With its focus on social workers and social casework, his analysis treads closest to the institutions in my study. By centering my analysis on the junction between private agencies and their public counterparts, I seek a broader approach than Polsky’s analysis of formal state structures. Particularly in the postwar era, voluntary agencies played a crucial role in legitimizing the use of therapeutic techniques, and often promoted their adoption by public institutions. But voluntary agencies did not command the same coercive forces that Polsky criticizes in therapeutic state, and their embrace of “normalizing techniques” was as much a product of their search for a role for voluntarism as it was the fascination with a seemingly scientific methodology or a desire for the social control of their clients.

¹¹ Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

¹² John Burnham’s article is a useful survey of the cultural resonance of psychoanalysis in the postwar era, though it only touches on how it was promoted by practitioners. John Burnham, “The Influence of Psychoanalysis Upon American Culture,” in Jacque M. Quen and Eric T. Carlson, *American Psychoanalysis: Origins and Development* (New York: Brunner-Mazel, 1978): 52-72. See also Nathan Hale, Jr., *The Rise and Crises of Psychoanalysis in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 276-299. Ellen Herman’s work is an important step toward connecting the therapeutic “ethos” to concrete institutional developments. Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). See also, Eva Moskowitz, *In Therapy We Trust: Americans’ Obsession With Self-Fulfillment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Examining the promotion of counseling by social workers in the voluntary sector complicates the matter. First, there was an intimate relationship between therapy and voluntarism. Most social workers in family agencies who embraced a counseling-centered relationship with their clients believed it had to be voluntary and that clients had to enter it under their own free will. Thus, voluntary sector social workers remained somewhat suspicious of efforts by social workers in the public sector to use counseling in “authoritative” situations such as the courts that could exercise coercive power. Second, while social workers in private agencies may have thought their clients needed their services, they had to work to convince them that they *wanted* them. To do so, they had to vigorously “interpret” (as social work parlance had it) the values of casework to clients, to other social agencies, to local elites, and to the media. Voluntary agencies also benefited from the frustration of efforts by public welfare personnel, particularly during World War Two and the late 1940s, to offer counseling as a universal service or even to incorporate individualized work with clients that embraced therapeutic insights. Such failures in the public sector heightened the prestige of voluntary agencies, though ultimately, by the 1950s, the increased legitimacy of such approaches in the voluntary sector aided their adoption by the public sector in the early 1960s. The activities of voluntary family agencies help us understand why psychological understandings of social problems and therapeutic solutions became fixtures of postwar liberalism.¹³

¹³ Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Daryl M. Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). A striking instance of the fusion of therapy and the Great Society is found in Kent Germany, “‘They Can Be Like Other People’: Race, Poverty, and Inclusion in New Orleans’ Early Great Society, 1964–1967,” in Elna Green, ed. *Beyond the New Deal: Social Welfare in the South Since 1930* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, forthcoming).

Social workers in family agencies sought to provide a widely applicable mode of helping. Up to, and through, the Depression, their primary mode of assistance had been providing or connecting clients to “hard” or “tangible” resources: money, housing, child care, or medical aid. Their clientele was drawn primarily from lower socio-economic strata, and their identity with the poor and with “relief” was fixed more intensely as a result of their role in emergency assistance in the Depression. But the “new alignments” of public and private, promoted vigorously by public welfare officials and largely embraced by private agencies pushed family agencies to vacate this field. It was never perfectly achieved. Throughout the period of this study, family agencies would still play an important role in procuring community resources—what was known as “environmental” assistance—for their clients. But as World War Two lifted the Depression, and the number of clients coming to family agencies also decreased sharply, family social workers sought to emphasize a more universal function for their services. This search, which placed put the counseling relationship as the medium through which any other services might be delivered, found an audience in the postwar era among individuals seeking therapeutic assistance, and other agencies seeking to tap the expertise of professional social workers. Nonetheless, the move by voluntary agencies toward service across the social classes was in constant tension with their legacy as welfare agencies. Indeed, by the early 1960s, some radical social workers urged that family agencies re-engage the poor and embrace their earlier role as providers of material goods instead of therapy.¹⁴

¹⁴ Cloward.

Scholars seeking a more forceful role for social work in improving the lives of the poor have generally dismissed the efforts of private agencies to focus their “giving” on counseling. The history of contemporary social work has featured several distinctive moments where radical voices within social work pushed the profession to seek broader social change—most notably during the Progressive Era, the 1930s, and the 1960s. In each of these moments, voluntary agencies, embodying the mainstream of social work practice, have come under fire as too timid, self-interested, or conservative. In particular, the search for professional status by social workers, most clearly evident in voluntary agencies with high rates of professionalization, has been a consistent target for critics of social work, and such approaches have also deeply influenced many historical accounts.¹⁵ Amati Etzioni famously declared social work one of the “semi-professions”: occupational categories aspiring to professional status but seeming to lack the knowledge basis and autonomy of such model professions such as medicine or the law.¹⁶ Even the most cursory examination of the professional literature of social work, particularly in the postwar period, can attest with the predominant focus on improving techniques rather than on broader questions of social justice.

This study will show how the limits of casework and the limits of voluntarism mirrored each other: they often focused narrowly on individual responsibility for problems, rather than social responsibility, and they did not command the resources that

¹⁵ The prime example of this is the seminal work by Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930* (New York: Atheneum, 1973). See also Ehrenreich and Walkowitz. More sympathetic accounts include Trattner, and Clarke Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action, 1918-1933* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963).

¹⁶ Amitai Etzioni, ed. *The Semi-Professions and Their Organization: Teachers, Nurses, and Social Workers* (New York: The Free Press, 1969).

could effect substantive changes in the material well-being of large numbers of people. Professionalization is critical to understanding both the relative success and the limits of voluntary family agencies in the postwar period. But by examining how voluntary agencies moved from dispensing alms to dispensing therapy, this study keeps its focus on how a set of particular institutions came to choose specific ways of helping people over time. In neither their original or ultimate incarnation did family agencies serve everybody, or even serve all their clients well—sometimes their efforts to help exhibited the darker aspects of social control that scholars such as Polsky focus on. But it will also argue that voluntary agencies did not simply manufacture the needs they met, and that, acknowledging their limits, voluntary agencies did play a significant role in developing counseling resources that many people have sought out voluntarily. That institutional self-preservation and professional ambition played a role in this process do not diminish the fact that this mode of helping had meaning to both clients and caseworkers in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁷

Much of the recent scholarship on the helping services, and indeed on the welfare state itself, have asked questions about the role that gender norms play in structuring welfare ideas and policies.¹⁸ In examining questions of institutional capacity and

¹⁷ A famous study of the class-based use of professional mental health services is August Hollingshead and Frederick Redlich, *Social Class and Mental Illness* (New York: Wiley, 1958). Sociological studies that examine how networks of relatives and friends influence decisions to use social agencies include John McKinlay, "Social Networks, Lay Consultation and Help-Seeking Behavior," *Social Forces* (Mar. 1973): 275-292; Allan Horwitz, "Social Networks and Pathways to Psychiatric Treatment," *Social Forces* (Sept. 1977): 86-105.

¹⁸ The literature on gender and the welfare state is, at this point, too vast to cite in its entirety. Some of the most influential books have been Gordon *Pitied But Not Entitled*; Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to Present* (Boston: South End Press, 1996). A fascinating study of case recording techniques by social workers, unfortunately in an earlier

legitimacy, this study does not use gender as a primary mode of analysis. However, in institutions who built their services around professional social workers who were overwhelmingly female, chose to promote those services more often than not in media aimed at women, and where female clients were generally the person who initiated the contact with the agency, it is certain that aspects of their institutional success or failure were driven by perceptions of them as “gendered” institutions. For example, as Chapter Four will discuss, controversies over the role of casework counseling in public assistance that ultimately strengthened the position of voluntary agencies, were influenced in part by resistance to young female social workers dispensing welfare under permissive, “therapeutic” norms. In general, though, this study builds on the work of others, particularly in the postwar era, who have demonstrated how intensifying cultural attention to the nuclear family, caused enormous stresses in the lives of women—some of whom sought help from casework counseling—and wider concern from communities who sought to support services that might help solidify conventional gender norms.¹⁹

The influence of race weaves in and out of this story. By the 1960s, one of the principal critiques of voluntary agencies generally is that they had distanced themselves from the needs of the poorest of the poor—often racial minorities, usually African Americans. Family agencies were overwhelmingly directed, administered, and staffed by whites. In areas where, prior to the Depression, such agencies were major sources of relief, they were one of the few city-wide institutions that African-Americans could turn

period than this book deals with, is Karen Tice, *Tales of Wayward Girls and Immoral Women: Case Records and the Professionalization of Social Work* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

¹⁹Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

to if the resources within their own communities were inadequate. In the postwar era, where African American migration to big cities had created substantial communities of poor blacks, family agencies that stressed “service” or counseling found themselves with less and less to give their minority clients. Part of the fierceness of attacks on voluntary agencies in the 1960s was that in fact they seemed to be so distant culturally, and had so little to offer, poor minorities. Such agencies often acknowledged such shortcomings—though, they usually replied, those in the most desperate need, including minorities, needed monetary help that public agencies were responsible for providing. Nonetheless, the racialization of welfare in the postwar era, and the tacit divide of “New Alignments” between relief and counseling, meant that family agencies had little capacity, either in money or in the orientation and skills of their staff, to address meaningfully the problems of poor African Americans.

Theories of Nonprofits

There has been a marked increase in social science scholarship in the past two decades dealing with the role of non-profit and voluntary organizations in American political, economic, and social life. Most has been in response to the higher political profile of nonprofits since the 1970s, which in turn has its roots in the explosion of nonprofit organizations fueled by the Great Society. Mounting political opposition to large-scale public institutions, as well as a critique of aspects of the welfare state, particularly public assistance, set the stage for President Ronald Reagan’s Task Force on Private Initiative, President George H.W. Bush’s celebration of voluntarism in a “Thousand Points of Light,” the “charitable choice” provisions of the 1996 welfare

reform law, and most recently, “compassionate conservatism.” While most of these programs have been mostly rhetorical and celebratory, they did tap a wider public mood of disillusionment with public institutions. It also turned attention to the widespread presence of nonprofit organizations and the functions they did, and might, play in carrying out public purposes.

Most social science of mid-century had viewed voluntarism as an aspect of the gently pluralistic society that America was presumed to be.²⁰ More recently, though, social scientists have tried to theorize why voluntary organizations appropriate certain tasks, how well they meet those tasks relative to business and government, the nature of their relationship to those sectors, and the explanation for the variance of the scope and function of the nonprofit sector cross-nationally. Of these, perhaps the most useful to this study is Lester Salamon’s work. Salamon’s initial claim was to re-direct earlier assumptions that non-profits necessarily competed with the public sector by pointing out that much of the recent history of non-profit/government relations has been one of collaboration—particularly in the social service sector. Government social provision has often risen out of “voluntary failure,” he argues, when voluntary institutions are found unable to provide goods and services demanded by a wide number of people.²¹

²⁰ For a review of the mid-century scholarship on voluntarism, see Constance Smith and Anne Freedman, *Voluntary Associations: Perspectives on the Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

²¹ Lester Salamon, *Partners in Public Service: Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). Salamon’s initial work grew out of efforts to demonstrate that social service budget cuts made early in the Reagan Administration could not be compensated for by the voluntary sector—which depended itself on many of the funds being cut. His more recent, cross-national work is of less use for this particular study, though it is worth noting that his conclusion is that *history* is one of the most significant variables in explaining variation between voluntary sectors in different countries. Other important contemporary works on voluntarism include Michael Lipsky and Steven Rathgeb Smith, “Nonprofit Organizations, Government, and the Welfare State,” *Political Science Quarterly* 104:4 (1989): 625-648; Michael Sosin, *Private Benefits: Material Assistance in the Private Sector* (Orlando, FL: Academic Press, 1986); Ralph Kramer, *Voluntary Agencies in the Welfare*

Salamon's emphasis on collaboration points to the same ultimate conclusion that this study reaches—that in a number of ways, voluntary family agencies depended on the public welfare state's financing of a social safety net in order for the voluntary agency to pursue a more focused, professional program. It moves us away from the ideological position that state expansion necessarily crowds out voluntary action. In many cases, as during voluntary fundraising during World War Two, state expansion provided the basis for voluntary expansion. But voluntary agencies in this study were also haunted, through the late 1940s, that public welfare might continue to encroach upon their domain by developing "services", i.e., social casework counseling. They sought to draw and solidify a line between the capacity of public assistance—to administer monetary grants to a large number of people—and of the voluntary sector—to deal intensively with the personal problems of a small number of people. By the time that public welfare advocates successfully won the chance to integrate casework into public assistance in 1962, family agencies had less overlap with public assistance clientele and supported rather than suspected such a policy. At that point, though, family agencies faced competition from another sector of the state, the burgeoning community mental health movement. Their relative diminishment by the expansion of publicly funded mental health work opens the question whether a collaborative model can accurately capture a historical dynamic that encompasses both competition and collaboration.²²

State (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). The study of nonprofits by historians has been fitful, and has tended to focus more on large-scale philanthropy than other institutional forms. Peter Dobkin Hall, *Inventing the Nonprofit Sector* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) is a useful introduction to some of the issues faced in studying nonprofits.

²² Salamon and other nonprofit theorists have been recently taken to task for insufficiently historicizing their work. Susannah Morris, "Organizational Innovation in Victorian Social Housing," *Nonprofit Sector and Voluntary Quarterly* (June 2002): 186-206.

Social science theory can also give us some insights into the persistence of voluntarism during a period of state expansion. The continued institutional presence of family agencies, even in the wake of their failure to meet the problems of massive unemployment, suggests not only their success at redefining themselves, but also the “embeddedness” of such institutions in the American political and social environment. As several scholars have observed, voluntary organizations serve a variety of functions, only some of which are defined by the services they provide. In particular, they can serve as nodes of elite associationalism through their boards of directors.²³ In addition, as this study will show, family agencies also served an important symbolic purpose of a private presence in social welfare that often overshadowed the actual function of an agency in a given community. For boards drawn from local elites, even those who argued for or accepted an expanded public presence in social welfare, family agencies helped serve as a symbolic, institutional embodiment of voluntarism. As Thomas Cadwalader, a conservative member of the Board of Managers of the Family Welfare Association of Baltimore wrote the agency’s executive in 1936, the Depression had proved that voluntary agencies could not carry the burden of monetary relief. But he could not agree that “the private charitable work which we are doing would be accepted as a responsibility of government....” To admit this, he said, would mean that the people were

²³ Mark Granovetter, “Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness,” *American Journal of Sociology* (Nov. 1985): 481-510; Wolfgang Seibel, “Government-Third Sector Relationships in a Comparative Perspective: The Cases of France and West Germany,” *Voluntas*, V. 1, (1990): p. 46; Seibel, “Government-nonprofit relationship: Styles and Linkage patterns in France and Germany,” in Stein Kuhnle and Per Selle, *Government and Voluntary Organizations: a Relational Perspective* (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1992): 53-70. Some of the more unusual characteristics of the organizational behavior of nonprofits are discussed in James Rooney, “Organizational Success Through Failure: Skid Row Rescue Missions,” *Social Forces* (Mar. 1980): 904-924.

“the wards of the state, consequently its slaves.”²⁴ Such convictions gave family agencies the space to recalibrate during the 1940s and move from relief to service—though at the same time, it hampered their ability to call for greater public responsibility in areas where charity could not function.

The discussion of nonprofit theory requires a clarification on the type of voluntarism studied in this project. Nonprofit agencies are an extremely heterogeneous group. Contemporary nonprofits are nominally linked by tax-exemptions, but encompass a variety of forms and purposes, from the social service organizations studied here, to the Elks Club, to churches, to trade associations or political parties. The use of the word “voluntary” in this study follows the contemporary self-understanding of the agencies under examination, but it merits explanation. As Roy Lubove pointed out, by the 1920s “voluntarism”, which connoted small, local groups of volunteers, had in reality been replaced in many instances by formal organizations that employed professionals, were financed by centralized, systematized fundraising, and often linked to national professional and standard-setting organizations. Other recent scholarship has pushed back this date to the nineteenth century and argued that local voluntarism had important national connections overlooked in the celebration of small-group voluntary efforts.²⁵ But is necessary to note that other forms of voluntarism co-existed, even within social service and social welfare, with the agencies studies here: mutual aid societies, particularly

²⁴ Thomas Cadwalader to Dorothy Pope, June 16, 1936, Folder 6, Box 27, Family and Children’s Service of Baltimore Records, Special Collections, Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University.

²⁵ Roy Lubove, *The Struggle for Social Security, 1900-1935* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 8-9; Theda Skocpol, Marshall Ganz, Ziad Munson, “A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States,” *American Political Science Review* (Sept. 2000): 527-546.

before the Depression; volunteers in churches or in civic or ethnic organizations; and individual philanthropic endowments, to name a few.

This project attempts to describe broad national trends while acknowledging the intensely local variations among voluntary institutions—even within the membership of the standard-setting Family Service Association of America. A single local study would have allowed more nuance and more attention to local politics and relationships with local agencies, but also would keep the study captured by one set of local dynamics. Thus, the project moves around the country, but with particular attention to the developments in several cities: Baltimore, Maryland, Wilmington, Delaware, and St. Paul, Minnesota. It is impossible to argue that they are absolutely representative, but the combination of their histories, along with insights into other local situations drawn from field reports and social work research projects give a rich portrait of the general trends in the sector while illustrating local particularities and variance. The study is also limited generally to agencies who were members of the FSAA. These were largely “non-sectarian” institutions, that is, without a formal affiliation to a church or church body (though they were, particularly in their early years, clearly Protestant institutions). It therefore does not examine in detail the transformations within Catholic social services during this time period, a subject worthy of its own history. It does include a number of Jewish family service agencies, as these were generally constituted as community facilities and not connected with a particular synagogue.²⁶ There is also consistent attention to the FSAA’s national office, both its national staff and board of directors, who

²⁶Dorothy Brown and Elizabeth McKeown, *The Poor Belong To Us: Catholic Charities and American Welfare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) carries the story up to the eve of World War Two, but there is no comparable work for the postwar period. On Jewish agencies, see Marc Dollinger, *Quest for Inclusion: Jews and Liberalism in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

served as spokesmen for the field and who interacted with other social work leaders and participated in national politics. It is clear, though, that the national leadership was more cosmopolitan and liberal than their constituent member agencies, which is why such a study must move between the local and national level.

This examination of one particular form of voluntarism will show how the voluntary sector evolved with, and against, the expanding public responsibility in social welfare in the twentieth century. By examining how private family agencies embraced social work counseling as a way of giving, it will reveal not only how ideas about social needs grew more expansive during the twentieth century, but also the vital part that the voluntary sector played in defining and addressing those needs.

CHAPTER ONE: NEW ALIGNMENTS

Introduction

Herbert Hoover's repudiation in the election of 1932, and the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, were decisive moments in the construction of the American welfare state. With Hoover passed the conviction that voluntary and local efforts should be the primary means of dealing with the burgeoning unemployment of an entrenched Depression. Roosevelt's election loosened the ideological reins that had constricted federal participation in unemployment relief. The image of Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's "minister of relief," handing out five million dollars to desperate state governments on the first day that the Federal Emergency Relief Administration opened for business in May 1933 embodies this transition.

The ascendancy of federal public welfare was seen most pointedly as a rebuke to advocates of relying on voluntary fundraising and institutions to meet social welfare needs. Josephine Brown, the author of a seminal early work on federal relief, was one of the chief proponents of this viewpoint. Brown was a social worker who served as a field agent for Hopkins, first at FERA and later at the Works Progress Administration. She laced her narrative on the expansion of public assistance with sharp reminders of the hubris of voluntary agencies that had disparaged public assistance and had sought to shoulder the burden of relief in the early years of the Depression. "During the first two years, 1929-1931," she wrote, "the private family agencies made a valiant attempt to carry staggering loads and, under the greatest pressure, to justify the faith of their leaders in the superiority of their methods over those of the public 'dole' system." By 1931,

though, “it was so obvious that unemployment relief had to be public.”²⁷ Private family agencies, once the pillar of social work and financial assistance in many communities, had finally been displaced by broader, better funded public assistance organizations.

Brown’s narrative obscures as much as it reveals. Historians of the U.S. welfare state have relied on it as a convenient compendium of the basic contours of emergency relief during the 1930s. They have also largely embraced its treatment of the shift from public to private, one that echoes the traditional narratives of the shift from the Hoover to Roosevelt administrations. And for good reason. As she pointed out, by 1937 federal funds provided 99 percent of the total relief expenditures in the United States. Her book is, however, clearly a polemic. Written in the late 1930s, the book reflects Brown’s disappointment that the Social Security Act had not created fully federalized public assistance, and that gaps in the safety net and conservative attacks on the New Deal had kept the rhetoric of voluntarism muttering at the local level. Brown reminded her readers that voluntarism was “fundamentally a local movement, concerned largely with the problems of individuals and families,” while public welfare dealt with “problems common to whole sections of the population.” Perhaps most revealing was the index to Brown’s book; the first listing under “Private Agencies” was “Alleged superiority of.”²⁸

In her defense of the federal public welfare program, Brown overstated the resistance of voluntary agencies to the expansion of public welfare and downplayed the close connection between charity and welfare throughout the New Deal. The national leadership of voluntary family welfare agencies had, in fact, spent much of the 1920s backing away from the stance against public relief taken by their predecessors in the

²⁷ Josephine C. Brown, *Public Relief, 1929-1939* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1940), p. 63, 80.

²⁸ Brown, p. 415, 419, 520.

Charity Organization movement. As the downturn in 1929 revealed itself to be deeper and more widespread than earlier recessions, family welfare agencies agitated for greater effort on the part of public authorities, first on the local, then on the state, and finally on the federal level, to bear the burden of needs that outstripped the capacity of voluntary fundraising and social service organizations. After federal intervention, first through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation during the Hoover administration, then through FERA, federal work relief, and the Social Security apparatus, voluntary agencies found that the gaps and inadequacies of public relief made drawing a clear line of public and private responsibility quite difficult in practice.

Brown's portrayal of voluntary agencies was not simply the perspective of an embattled public sector employee. Like many prominent social workers in public service in the 1930s, including Harry Hopkins, Brown had cut her teeth in the voluntary sector—though this fact went unmentioned in her book on public relief. For over ten years prior to joining FERA in 1934, Brown had worked on the national staff of the Family Welfare Association of America, the national organization of the private agencies she took to task. As a field agent, she traveled across the country to advise local agencies on problems of organization, professionalization, and relations with other local institutions. It was, perhaps, this intimate perspective on local conditions that convinced her of the limits of voluntarism and the strong conservative strain that ran through the leadership of local voluntary institutions. As a specialist in rural social work, Brown was keenly aware that voluntary institutions such as family welfare agencies were primarily urban phenomena, and that thousands of counties across the country lacked any organized charity. However, voluntary agencies enjoyed a professional and ideological

prominence disproportionate to their capacities. Brown found herself having to contend with the prominence of private agencies even in the wake of the biggest victories ever scored by public welfare advocates.²⁹

Social workers in the voluntary sector were furious with Brown's apostasy. In their eyes, they had been among the earliest and most ardent advocates for better public assistance. Joanna Colcord, director of the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation, began a behind-the-scenes effort to have reviews of Brown's book point out the contributions of family agencies to public welfare, both before and after the Depression, and finally took it upon herself to correct Brown. Colcord and other reviewers stressed the contributions of voluntary sector social workers to drafting the first federal unemployment relief bill and to setting the standards for good social work practice in public welfare. But throughout, there was a hint that, in retrospect, voluntary sector social workers wished they had been more proactive in promoting federal unemployment assistance.³⁰

As this chapter will show, the embrace of welfare by voluntary family agencies started in the 1920s, even prior to the crisis of the Depression. Such agencies, in the several hundred towns and cities where they existed in the 1920s, would have been one of the most likely places to find one of the several thousand members of the American Association of Social Workers (organized in 1921). Family agencies, along with

²⁹ On Brown, see Emilia E. Martinez-Brawley, "From Countrywoman to Federal Emergency Relief Administrator: Josephine Chapin Brown, a Biographical Study," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* (June 1987): 153-185.

³⁰ MLaB to MW, Nov. 11, 1940, Folder "Membership, Public Depts," Box 17, Family Service Association of America Records, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota; Ruth Hill, review in *The Family* (Mar. 1941), p. 29-30; Joanna Colcord, "Social Work and the First Federal Relief Program," *The Compass* (Sept. 1943): 17-23.

hospitals, child guidance clinics, and mental hygiene clinics, were one of the key institutions that nurtured the emergence of the profession of social work. Of all these, family agencies, often known in this period as Associated Charities, were where the link between social work and “relief” of poverty was forged. In the 1920s, though, as more and more social workers considered themselves professionals, the individualized attention to their cases—cast as “casework” by the profession’s early codifier, Mary Richmond—became central to their professional practice. The content and practice of casework came under increasing scrutiny as it became more important to distinguishing social workers as professionals.

As social workers stressed casework as their primary “service,” it put them at increasing odds with their day-to-day practice of providing financial assistance or negotiating clients through the tangle of social institutions in order to tend to their health, employment, legal and recreational needs. One reason for this tension was the increasing emphasis on insights drawn from psychoanalysis by social work educators. This emphasis encouraged social workers to focus on the psychological and emotional roots of their client’s “maladjustment” to society, which had manifested itself in unemployment, poverty, and misbehavior. When they faced clients who were poor for reasons clearly out of their control, the need for investing costly professional time seemed unnecessary, and a task suitable for public institutions.

Professional motives were not the only reasons driving charity’s engagement with welfare. Mounting expenditures on monetary assistance in the 1920s, even in a prosperous decade, caused many social workers and agency executives to wonder if the public sector could shoulder part of the burden. The growing presence of centralized

fundraising organizations for voluntary agencies, the Community Chest, introduced a new fiscal discipline in agencies. The fear that such discipline might sacrifice professional service in order to provide monetary relief also made voluntary sector agencies consider the merits of public welfare. A handful of "model" public assistance agencies also made it seem that earlier fears of political meddling and indiscriminate giving could be assuaged by high standards of professional social work. By the eve of the Depression, then, leaders of voluntary agencies were far more prepared to ask for public assistance than their institutional forebears had in the late nineteenth century, or even in the early 1910s.

The crisis of the Depression forced the hand of voluntary agencies toward the government, as many studies have shown. But for some in the movement, the expansion of public welfare suggested that the expansion of government need not crowd out the efforts of voluntary organizations. Rather, they hoped, public welfare would form the basis of a new division of labor, "New Alignments" in the words of Linton Swift of the FWAA, between public and private, one more suited to the needs of a mass, industrial society. Such alignments were slow to come. Public welfare's expansion radically diminished the proportion of financial need met by voluntary agencies, but voluntary agencies remained enmeshed in the welfare system throughout the decade. Private agencies helped build the administrative capacity of public welfare in the early 1930s by transferring personnel and entire organizations into the distribution of public relief. But the gaps and inadequacies of public relief kept a steady stream of the needy coming to family agencies for assistance.

This chapter, then, will argue for a more nuanced reading of the role of voluntarism up to and through the Depression, one somewhat at odds with Josephine Brown. Voluntary agencies did not see themselves utterly opposed to public welfare in the 1920s, nor did they remove themselves from relief during the New Deal. A mixed welfare state still asked charity to shoulder a significant burden.

The Pressure of Relief in the 1920s

In early 1926, Linton Swift, head of the American Association of Organizing Family Social Work (predecessor of the Family Welfare Association of America), warned his board of directors that they needed to commission a study of their agencies' provision of material relief. Expenditures for relief were increasing and "the societies themselves were at a loss for an explanation." The economy had rebounded from the recession of the early 1920s, and there seemed to be no obvious reason for the rising applications and costs. A statistical study produced later that fall by Ralph Hurlin of the Russell Sage Foundation confirmed the reports from the field that Swift had been receiving. In 96 agencies in 37 large cities, there had been a 215 percent increase in the amount of relief granted since 1916. Hurlin broke down the causes for the increase: the population of the cities had grown by 19 percent, the cost of living had increased 57 percent, the number of families receiving relief had increased 63 percent, and the average grants had increased by 24 percent. Swift wrote to Karl de Schweinitz, director of the Philadelphia Family Society, a prominent member of the AAOFSW, "It appears from Hurlin's charts that the peak of ascending relief is not yet in sight. If it is impossible for

family societies, particularly in chest cities, to obtain much greater resources, what are we going to do about it?"³¹

Family agencies had brought some of the situation upon themselves. As many were the institutional outgrowth of Charity Organization Societies of the late nineteenth century, they inherited the result of the effort to privatize "outdoor relief" or direct monetary assistance. The Charity Organization movement was an effort to both rationalize and restrict the provision of material relief in large urban settings. In the United States, Charity Organization Societies were created in large cities in the East Coast and the Midwest that were expanding rapidly through industrialization and immigration. Conceived of initially as coordinating mechanisms, they sought to practice a version of "scientific philanthropy" that would apply modern organizational principles such as efficiency to the distribution of social aid by centralizing the relief-giving process from the multitude of religious, ethnic and philanthropic agencies that offered aid to the poor. At the same time, many Charity Organization Societies worked to limit the amount of outdoor relief provided by public institutions, fearing the abuse by city political machines that might use the relief rolls to reward supporters. In several large cities, by the 1890s, notably Brooklyn, New York, and Philadelphia, the COS efforts were successful, and relief was privatized.³²

³¹Administrative Committee Minutes, American Association for Organizing Family Social Work, Jan. 30, 1926, Folder 5, Box 4; Linton Swift to Karl de Schweinitz, Aug. 4, 1926, Folder 10, Box 14; "How May the Private Family Welfare Agency Meet the Financial Dilemma Resulting from the Rising Tide of Relief Expenditures?" [1929], Folder 28, Box 32, all in FSAA Records. My analysis here parallels and is indebted to that of Jeff Singleton, *The American Dole: Unemployment Relief and the Welfare State in the Great Depression* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 2000), ch. 2.

³²Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), p. 47-54, 71-74; Adonica Y. Lui, "Political and Institutional Constraints of Reform: The Charity Reformers' Failed Campaigns Against Public Outdoor Relief, New York City, 1874-1898," *Journal of Policy History* 7:3 (1995): 341-363.

A similar phenomenon occurred several decades later in the effort to pass mothers' pension laws. By the 1920s, over 40 states had passed mother's aid legislation. Such laws provided cash relief to single mothers to enable them to stay home to care for their children rather than go into the work force.³³ Charity organization societies were often the principal opponents of such measures, with criticisms similar to those against outdoor relief. To social workers such as Mary Richmond, casework's leading theorist in the 1910s, the prospect of the expansion of public welfare through mother's pensions threatened to create an open-ended commitment to relief that politicians would move to exploit. An entitlement to a pension eroded the central principle of casework, that aid should be proffered, denied, and tailored on the basis of the individual situation of the client. Moreover, public aid, freely given, threatened the moral fiber of the recipient, who would learn dependency rather than self-sufficiency. As Gertrude Vaile, a pioneer public welfare social worker recalled decades later, many social workers "simply could not understand how a social worker with case work ideals could go into a public agency." Such ideals, in the eyes of social workers in the private sector, required the sustained attention of a social worker—not a political appointee, and not a clerk who simply handed out money based on the client's status as a widow or a veteran. Others thought that keeping the "deserving" poor out of the public welfare system would help preserve their dignity. Vaile recalled "heated arguments with private agency friends who thought an important part of their function was to save 'self-respecting people' from the 'humiliation of having to receive public relief.'" If public agencies took care of widows,

³³Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 10, 425-428; Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 37.

critics of voluntarism noted darkly, they would also deprive charities of one of their prime fundraising images. The legacy of opposition to public aid had left private agencies as one of the more visible and best publicized sources of financial assistance in many cities. Even Josephine Brown acknowledged that, despite providing less money than public sources, “private relief loomed large in the consciousness of the socially minded citizen....”³⁴

The Community Chest movement that had accelerated in the 1920s also heightened the prominence of relief. Spurred by businessmen who sought a more centralized and rationalized way to deal with the numerous charitable appeals they received, chests offered local voluntary social agencies such as the Associated Charities, the Boy Scouts, the Young Men’s Christian Association, or the local settlement house, a deal: in return for an agreement to forgo their own individual fundraising drives, they would receive a portion of one large annual fund drive conducted by the Chest. While the idea of “federated fundraising” had been broached in the late nineteenth century, and had gained ground among Jewish social welfare organizations in particular, the myriad appeals for foreign relief during World War One created a movement. In 1922, 80 cities had converted their “war chests” into community chests for peacetime fundraising, and by 1926 there were 251 chests; on the eve of the Depression, there were 315.³⁵

³⁴ Gertrude Vaile, “Contributions to Public Welfare,” *The Family* (Mar. 1946): 33-34; Roy Lubove, *The Struggle for Social Security, 1900-1935* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 101-106; Brown, p. 159

³⁵ Homer Borst, “Community Chests and Councils,” *Social Work Yearbook, 1929* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1929), p. 95; John Dawson, “Community Chests,” *Social Work Yearbook 1947*, p. 104; John R. Seely, et al. *Community Chest: A Case Study in Philanthropy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 17-21; Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), ch. 7.

The move to chests was not simply the result of a cabal of businessmen seeking to reduce the annoyance of appeals. It was part and parcel of the “New Era” combination of voluntarism, coordination, and efficiency most closely associated with Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce from 1921 to 1928, and then President. Chests served as a modernizing force within the charitable sector, and offered agencies release from the time-consuming task of fundraising to focus on their services. Moreover, the evidence suggested that in the initial years following the organization of a community chest, the total raised by its campaign often exceeded the combined efforts of the agencies prior to organization. Chests offered a chance to make voluntarism more streamlined and efficient. In exchange for participation in the Chests, though, member agencies had to agree to review of their agency’s budgets by the Chest, and thus sacrificed a significant degree of autonomy. Salaries and new programs were subject to Chest approval. Chests also served as a gatekeeper and legitimator of charities, and generally excluded “controversial” agencies. While the emerging power of chests was a lively topic of discussion in social welfare circles, most agencies that were offered the chance to join generally did so—with the significant exception of the Red Cross.³⁶

The spread of community chest fundraising had the ironic impact of seeming to have increased the awareness and expectations of relief, as Jeff Singleton has noted. As one writer observed in 1929, the result of chest publicity had established “a tremendous contract with the community for meeting its relief needs,” and had made family agencies the “relief pocket book” of the community. Linton Swift of the AAOFSW thought that

³⁶ Lubove, p. 184; Singleton, 41-44; Dawson, p. 105.

chests had helped uncover new cases of need and increased demand for relief.³⁷ On the other hand, chests were becoming wary of rising costs of relief within family agencies. Edward Lynde of the Cleveland Associated Charities complained in 1927 “we have been challenged by prominent men, in community funds and elsewhere, to show results for our larger expenditure or to curtail our expenses radically both for service salaries and relief.” Swift worried that in cities where relief expanded, agency relations with chests “were thereby made difficult and adequate or intensive case work seemed impossible.”³⁸

One prominent example of the tensions that inhered in rising relief, standards of professional service, and the emergence of both public welfare and community chests was a controversy that flared up in Columbus, Ohio. Columbus, like a number of other cities, lacked a public welfare department of its own, and instead administered relief by granting appropriations to the Family Service Society of Columbus, whose caseworkers handled administration. But in the post-World War One period, the FSS had been regularly overspending its annual grants from the City Council, which the Council then had to supplement. During the economic downturn of 1922, the FSS’s relief expenditures increased by 72 percent from 1921, and were over three times what the city had originally appropriated for that year. When the FSS requested an appropriation for 1923 that matched the 1922 request, the city balked, and was further angered when, in the first

³⁷ “How May the Private Family Welfare Agency Meet the Financial Dilemma....”; Swift, “The Relief Problem in Family Social Work,” [1929], Folder 10, Box 15, FSAA (a draft of the article which came out in *The Family* in March, 1929); Singleton, p. 41-43. See also, Minutes, National Social Work Council, Mar. 2, 1928, Folder 3 Box 4, NSWA for a discussion of worries about the influence of chests.

³⁸ Edward Lynde, “The Significance of Changing Methods in Relief Giving,” *The Family* (July 1927): 135; Administrative Committee Minutes, AAOFSW, Jan. 30, 1926.

months of the year, the FSS spent even more on relief than it had requested (and was denied), despite the fact that its caseload had dropped by 25 percent.³⁹

While the sharp increase in relief in 1922 was clearly driven in part by economic conditions, several other factors were also at work in Columbus. The central issue was rising standards of professional conduct among social workers. “Adequate” relief, suitable to maintain the dignity of the family, was a central tenet of professional social work by the early 1920s, as contrasted to the meager allocations of politically appointed poor law administrators. Observers commenting on the rise in relief costs in the early 1920s attributed it not only to economic problems, but also to “a more liberal relief policy” on behalf of workers and agencies. In Columbus, the increase in expenditures as caseloads decreased in 1923 was seen as an effort by caseworkers to raise standards of relief—though the average grant of \$17 in early 1923, an increase from \$14 in the two years prior, was still low.⁴⁰ Professional standards also dictated a reasonable caseload so as to permit a real relationship between the caseworker and the client, or “intensive” casework. While the Columbus agency had averaged roughly 60 cases per worker in the late 1910s, the surge in cases in 1922 led the new executive of the agency, Walter West, to add additional staff in order to bring caseloads back in line.

³⁹ [Allen Burns and David Adie], “Report on the Break in Working Relations of the Community Funds and Family Service Society of Columbus, Ohio and on Efforts at Securing a New Working Agreement,” 1926, Folder Columbus OH 1926, Box 75, FSAA; “What Happened in Columbus,” *The Survey* (May 15, 1926): 261-263. Daniel Walkowitz has also explored this incident, with an emphasis on how the American Association of Social Workers perceived the issues at stake. Daniel Walkowitz, *Working With Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle Class Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 81-85.

⁴⁰ “Statement of Relief Figures for Three Month’s Period,” Apr. 30, 1922, Folder 28, Box 32; John B. Dawson, “A Study of Relief Giving With Special Relation to Increased Costs,” June 1922, Folder 29, Box 32; Dawson, “Comment on Report of Columbus Situation,” Aug. 12, 1926, Folder Columbus OH 1926, Box 75, all FSAA. On the relationship between rising relief standards and professionalism, see Singleton, p. 35-39.

In the complex conflict that ensued, the city cut off public subsidy to the agency and created a public agency to distribute relief. At the same time as the relationship between the city government and FSS was deteriorating, business leaders in Columbus were organizing its Community Fund, which the FSS joined in 1923. But the relationship with the Fund proved as rocky as that with public officials. Fund leaders were convinced that West had hired more staff on the eve of the transfer in order to lock in lower caseloads for their workers. Furthermore, the FSS continued to overspend the amount the Fund appropriated for relief to supplement the public allowances. In the rancor that followed, FSS social workers (and some board members) protested that “no self-respecting experienced worker” would work with such meager amounts of relief “because she would be quick to realize how useless her work would be.” A committee from the American Association of Social Workers determined that high caseloads and low relief would “break down the health and the professional morale” of the workers.⁴¹ For its part, the Community Fund accused the agency of deliberately, unilaterally, and consistently spending above and beyond the amount granted. “However desirable it may be to provide funds to approximate ideal standards of work,” the Fund wrote to the FSS, they nonetheless had to live within their means. Despite efforts at mediation on behalf of representatives of the national associations of both community chests and family agencies, the situation deteriorated to the point where the Fund temporarily expelled the FSS from the federated fundraising organization.⁴²

⁴¹ Philip King, Gardiner Lattimer, Cecil North to Board of Family Service Society of Columbus, [Oct. 1933], in “Report on Break in Working Relations;” “Report of the Subcommittee of the American Association of Social Workers on the Break in the Working Relations Between the Community Fund and the Family Service Society of Columbus, Ohio,” [1926], Folder Columbus OH 1926, Box 75, FSAA.

⁴² J.H. Franz to Frank Howe, Sept. 8, 1925, in “Report on Break in Working Relations.”

While social workers worried about the seeming indifference to professional standards on behalf of both public authorities and the Community Fund, the broader lesson was that the emergence of Chests had made relief giving more contentious. While the report co-authored by the American Association of Organizing Family Social Work (the family agency's national association) had spread the blame for the situation between both the Fund and the FSS, the AAOFSW offered Walter West a job after he left the troubled agency, to serve as evidence of the group's "support for the standards of work for which he and his Board of Directors had stood in the Columbus dispute." West, wrote another national social work leader, "actually suffered from the end results of big business control of social work. He has stood for liberty."⁴³ West's martyrdom for professional standards and autonomy underscored the issue that relief would be a thorn in the side of family agencies in the 1920s.

Dissatisfactions with the relief-giving function within voluntary family agencies were also driven by the emergence of new psychoanalytic theories in social casework. Immediately following World War One, the national conferences and publications of the family casework field began carrying articles by several scholars, primarily from the New York, Pennsylvania, and Smith Schools of Social Work, exploring the relevance of new insights gleaned from Sigmund Freud's writing. Social work's interest in psychiatric and

⁴³ AAOFSW Administrative Committee, Apr. 10, 1926, Folder 5, Box 4, FSAA; David Holbrook to Howard Braucher, Feb. 25, 1928, Folder 43, Box 6, National Social Welfare Assembly Records, Supplement 1, SWHA. In his analysis of the Columbus situation, Walkowitz sees a division between "largely female caseworkers and male supervisors and executives." While the female caseworkers had articulated their discontent with their conditions of work, the increase in staff in 1922 happened with West's support, and the stance of the caseworkers had the support of a majority of the board and the agency's president—at least until West was apparently encouraged to resign as a result of the final agreement with the Fund in early 1926. It suggests that the agency had a commitment to professional standards and agency autonomy shared by both executives and caseworkers, and that in this case, the divide along gendered lines is not so neat. West would go on to head the American Association of Social Workers.

psychological knowledge had been conditioned by developments in other fields, notably, the mental hygiene movement, the child guidance movement, and the treatment of veterans from World War One. Practitioners in all these fields had been able to use seemingly scientific principles to move the assessment of individual problems away from what they perceived as the moralistic judgments of the nineteenth century. For these workers, insights from psychiatry, and particularly Freud, helped explain the “maladjustment” of individuals as the specific results of a “psychic event” in the past, or of an unresolved inner conflict. The patina of scientific authority made such arguments attractive to caseworkers not only for use in their day-to-day work, but as a means by which to bolster their professional standing and to distinguish themselves from the volunteers that had dominated social agencies through the early twentieth century. Moreover, the interest in the inner life of clients, as many scholars have argued, seem to shift the attention of caseworkers away from broader environmental problems that had preoccupied casework prior to the war, such as low wages or poor housing.⁴⁴

The nature and the extent of the “psychiatric deluge” of the 1920s in social work has been an object of controversy within scholarship on social work. The influence of psychoanalysis on leading social work activists, particularly on the East Coast, was undeniable, and as one writer recalled, going into analysis oneself was almost a “professional prerequisite” in some agencies. Coursework in psychiatric social work also appeared in several major schools of social work. A handful of voluntary social agencies, particularly the Jewish Board of Guardians, a child welfare agency in New York City, began to aggressively recruit psychiatrists for their staff to help train and guide their

⁴⁴ John Ehrenreich, *The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 65-77; Lubove, *Professional Altruist*, p. 76-117.

social caseworkers. And overall, there was clearly a sense that these new insights into the role of emotions and relationships offered social caseworkers the possibility of better practice and higher status. As one caseworker, after attending the annual National Conference of Social Work in 1928, reported back to her board at the Family Welfare Association of Baltimore that “the meetings related to the technique of case work and supervision were outstanding ones at the conference. The trend of family case work leans more and more toward the psychological and psychiatric schools of thought.”⁴⁵

But the deluge had not swept across the country, and it had not filtered down to the day-to-day practice of most caseworkers. Several scholars have suggested that the emphasis on the influence of psychiatry in the actual work of social work in the 1920s has been overstated, and that at the most, it was a regional phenomenon confined to a handful of East Coast agencies. It was explicitly rejected during the 1920s by the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration, run by Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge. Most social workers who became interested in psychiatric knowledge in the 1920s tended to embrace its language and categories as a means of diagnosis, rather than as the basis for a full-blown, intensive, therapeutic relationship. In 1935, one study of eight family agencies in medium-sized cities on the East Coast and in the Midwest found that “there was little use of any methods that could be considered an encroachment on the field of psychiatry.” Even those historians who argue for the centrality of psychiatry as a tool of professionalization admit that it was rarely incorporated in daily practice in this period. Significantly, even at the Jewish Board of

⁴⁵ Dorothy Bird Daly, “Supervision of the Newly Employed Experienced Worker,” *The Family* (June 1946): 148; Ehrenreich, p. 79, 241n51; Lubove, *Professional Altruist*, p. 79; Walkowitz, p. 75; Board of Directors Minutes, Family Welfare Association of Baltimore, May 25, 1928, 2:27, Baltimore Family and Children’s Society Records, Special Collections, Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University.

Guardians in the 1920s, case workers did not find much practical use for the expertise of the resident psychiatrist.⁴⁶

Whatever the extent of the spread of formal psychiatric knowledge and practice in social work in the 1920s, it was nonetheless difficult for social workers in private family agencies to reconcile it with their major tasks of providing relief and connecting individuals with community resources. Some started to view the process of granting relief through the lens of the emotions. One caseworker from New York's Charity Organization Society wrote in 1930, money, "because of the many ways in which it touches human emotions," was a powerful tool in casework, but its granting had to be monitored with sensitivity, since outright grants provided "no thrill of accomplishment" for the client, threatened self-esteem, and "add to our client's burden of inferiority."⁴⁷ Focusing on the emotional aspects of relief made some people's needs less compelling to caseworkers. A committee of the AAOFSW studying the problem of the homeless, for instance, reported that transient men held little promise for casework, concluding that "the homeless are usually uninteresting and complicated cases to handle."⁴⁸ The elderly, whose needs were usually driven by their age and limited earning capacity, were viewed similarly. As relief

⁴⁶ Leslie Alexander, "Social Work's Freudian Deluge: Myth or Reality?" *Social Service Review* (Dec. 1972): 517-538; Martha Heineman Field, "Social Casework During the 'Psychiatric Deluge,'" *SSR* (Dec. 1980): 482-507; Wendy B. Posner, "Charlotte Towle: A Biography" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1986): 140-141; Frederika Neumann, "The Use of Psychiatric Consultation by a Case Work Agency," *The Family* (Oct. 1945): 217-218; Helen Witmer, "Current Practices in Intake and Service in Family Welfare Organizations," *Smith College Studies in Social Work* (Dec. 1935): 209. See also, Maurice Karpf, *The Scientific Basis of Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931). John Ehrenreich has focused attention on how social workers used psychoanalysis to advance their professional status in the 1920s, but is less interested in its spread in practice among caseworking agencies. See p. 123, 241n51. On the particular role that Jewish professionals played in promoting popular psychology, see Andrew R. Heinze, "Jews and American Popular Psychology: Reconsidering the Protestant Paradigm of Popular Thought," *Journal of American History* (Dec. 2001): 950-978.

⁴⁷ Eleanor Neustadter, "Relief: A Constructive Tool in Case Work Treatment," (New York: Charity Organization Society, circa 1930), p. 9. A seminal work on the subject was Grace Marcus, *Some Aspects of Relief in Family Casework* (New York: Charity Organization Society, 1929).

⁴⁸ Report of the Committee on the Homeless, AAOFSW, Apr. 1927, Folder 14, Box 13, FSAA.

was mounting as a function of family agencies, it was diminishing as a source of professional interest for some caseworkers.

Thus, by the late 1920s, a number of factors combined to make relief a pressing issue for voluntary family agencies. The general increase in costs, driven by increased organization and publicizing of welfare services by Community Chests and by rising professional standards of “adequate” relief, strained the capacity of family agencies. The Columbus agency’s efforts to achieve higher levels of service, both in the amount of relief given and the numbers of clients workers dealt with, had been repudiated by the local Chest, and suggested that, under the new regime of Chest financing, relief might be more of an albatross than advantage to family agencies. These factors helped reduce the ideological and institutional resistance of voluntary family agencies to public welfare that had characterized them a generation earlier.

Embracing Welfare

Despite the opposition of many charity societies, the scope of public welfare activities had expanded during the Progressive Era. The engine of this expansion was the widespread passage of mother’s aid laws, and the establishment of public welfare departments, particularly at the state level—though the latter generally focused on child welfare and state institutions, such as mental hospitals or prisons. As the Executive Committee of the AAOFSW observed in 1920, “Many of the societies, particularly in the west, are confronted with all sorts of plans involved in amendments to city charters, city and county ordinances, acts of state legislatures for the organization or reorganization of departments of charity of family welfare, board of public welfare, etc., which often touch

upon the field work of our societies.” State welfare spending rose from \$52 million in 1913 to \$151 million in 1927, an increase of 290 percent, while the cost of living rose only 180 percent. Outdoor relief (non-institutional aid, such as cash grants or commodities), the form of spending most criticized, remained a widespread phenomena; 87 percent of cities over 30,000 appropriated funds for outdoor relief in 1925. Of those cities, their spending on outdoor relief rose from \$2.2 million in 1911 to \$16.4 million in 1928.⁴⁹

Moreover, by the late 1920s, statistics confirmed that in fact, in most cities, public funds contributed the bulk of expenditures, even on outdoor relief. A study in Chicago revealed that in 1928, the Cook County Bureau of Public Welfare and the Mother’s Pension Division of the Juvenile Court distributed 63.7 percent of the relief funds, while private agencies handled 36.3 percent. A similar study in 14 mid-sized cities found a breakdown of 70.2 percent public, and 29.8 percent private.⁵⁰

The growth of public welfare, and the increase in spending on relief by private family agencies, convinced the national leadership of the family service field that they needed to try to work with and improve public welfare, and systematize their relationships with those institutions. Francis McLean, the executive secretary of the AAOFSW, had spent time as a charity administrator in Montreal and Chicago, and had traveled extensively in areas of the country that lacked strong private agencies. He urged

⁴⁹Morton Keller, *Regulating a New Society: Public Policy and Social Change in America, 1900-1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 87; Mary Phlegar Smith, “Municipal Expenditures for Family Relief,” *Social Forces* (Mar. 1933): 370; AAOFSW Executive Committee Agenda, Oct. 30, 1920, Folder 11, Box 6, FSAA.

⁵⁰Helen Jeter and A. W. McMillen, “Some Statistics of Family Welfare and Relief in Chicago, 1928,” *Social Service Review* (Sept. 1929): 448-459; “Receipts and Expenditures of Social Agencies During the Year 1928,” *SSR* (Sept. 1930): 363; Katz, p. 159.

his colleagues to engage and promote the development of public welfare departments.

Gertrude Vaile, a pioneer public sector social worker, recalled that McLean was “utterly undefensive in his attitude toward agency functions” that he was able to envision legitimate spheres of operation for both public and private welfare.⁵¹ McLean successfully lobbied the organization to open its membership to public departments of welfare that were using professional social workers, and roughly a dozen departments joined in the next few years.⁵²

More important than standard setting was trying to discern a set of principles of cooperation among public and private agencies. Vaile—whose social casework credentials were impeccable, and under whose guidance the Denver Department of Welfare had become a model of social work practice (outshining even its private counterpart)—was put in charge of a committee to research the situation.⁵³ Their survey of member societies elicited replies from agencies in 162 cities. Of these, 11 cities had no form of public outdoor relief. 29 others had some sort of combination or subsidy plan, whereby private agencies administered public funds or were linked to public departments. Those lacking any outdoor relief were generally very large cities, such as New York, which had abolished such relief in the late nineteenth century. The cities that combined departments tended to be small, eight having a population of less than 30,000. The remaining 122 cities had both private and public organizations, with no formal

⁵¹ Vaile, p. 34; Margaret Rich, *A Belief in People: A History of Family Social Work* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1956), p. 70-72.

⁵² AAOWSW Executive Committee Minutes, Oct. 31, 1921; May 15, 1923, Folder 11, Box 6; “Report of Committee on Alignment of Socialized Departments,” [July 5, 1921], Committee on Public Depts., Box 12, FSAA.

⁵³ Gertrude Vaile, “Principles and Methods of Outdoor Relief,” *Proceedings, National Conference of Charities and Corrections*, 42 (1915): 480-481; Jim Stafford, “Gertrude Vaile,” in Walter Trattner, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Social Welfare in America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 723-725.

institutional links between them, but with varied patterns of interaction. About a third of the cities had an active Social Service Exchange, in which both private and public agencies exchanged information on the clients with whom they were working.⁵⁴

There was no clear-cut division of labor that was easily generalizable, but a trend toward private agencies shifting the most costly cases to the public was discernable. Public departments were more likely to handle old-age related poverty, and cases with long-term need, while private societies tended to handle short term cases. The Minneapolis Family Welfare Society reported that the city's Board of Public Welfare had, in the past three to five years, taken responsibility not only for the mother's aid cases, but also for cases relating to unemployment and old age, "because the load was too heavy for the [private society] and they seemed best to turn over." Vaile noted that "It is generally agreed that the public department should bear the heavy burden of relief." Faced with the challenge of increasing numbers of the "deserving" poor, private societies in practice tried to shift the most expensive, most routine, and least interesting cases into the public sector. In places like Worcester, Massachusetts, as the Associated Charities (an AAOFSW member) reported to Vaile, "the [Overseer of the Poor] takes all families falling into distress, who have lived in Worcester only a short time or have a pauper record acquired or inherited; they mean to leave us all young families, who are not paupers or pauper families." Other studies confirmed such patterns. In Chicago, in 1928, while the private agencies provided only 36.6 percent of the relief funds, it handled 72.2 percent of the cases, suggesting that they tended to deal with numerous cases needing only "minor relief." This was not the product of philosophical convictions about the

⁵⁴ *Division of Work Between Public and Private Agencies Dealing With Families in Their Homes* (New York: AAOFSW, 1925)

proper role of each sector, however. In Worcester, as in many places, the survey noted, "This div. of wk. just grew."⁵⁵

Social workers tended more toward functional rather than ideological arguments. Rarely was voluntarism cited as inherently superior. Workers in voluntary agencies did not see themselves "locked in a zero-sum battle" with public welfare. Voluntary agencies of the 1920s shared more than they would have liked to admit with public agencies. The integration of private family agencies into centralized fundraising mechanisms, the dozens if not hundreds of caseworkers employed by the largest private agencies, and their insistence on high professional standards, certainly gave many voluntary agencies many of the formal attributes of the bureaucratic structures being constructed in public welfare.⁵⁶ The size and complexity of the organizations who were members of the AAOFSW ran the gamut from agencies with one professional worker to those, such as New York's Charity Organization Society, that employed several hundred, it seems clear that most people working within these institutions at some level realized that the nineteenth century rhetoric of voluntarism did not easily fit the reality of many social welfare organizations in the 1920s.

The most common rationalization for public-private collaboration was that private societies could act as experimental agencies. Private agencies would try new techniques which then, if found effective, would gain public approval and be recognized as something worthy of public support. This approach was not new to the 1920s. Amos Warner argued in his influential book, *American Charities* (1894) that as opposed to

⁵⁵ AAOFSW, "Memorandum Regarding Division of Cases," 1924, p. 14-16. Pub. Depts. Comm., Box 12, FSAA; *Division of Work*, p. 10; Jeter and McMillen.

⁵⁶ Quote from Singleton, p. 29; Lubove, *Struggle for Social Security*, p. 8.

charity, "the state is not inventive, its agencies are not adaptive and flexible; but it is capable of doing a large, expansive work when the methods for it are sufficiently elaborated."⁵⁷ Charity, Warner and others held, could serve as the trailblazer for future expansion of public services. By the 1920s, some social work leaders acknowledged that the government's resources, and at times its powers of coercion, made it more effective in applying the techniques that charity developed. As Ralph Barrow of the private Children's Aid Society of Hartford, Connecticut wrote in 1925, private agencies could use their resources "as a laboratory," but that the public would take over once the project had been "approved as good."⁵⁸ Dr. William Snow of the American Social Hygiene Association posited in 1925 that there was a natural continuum from the university to private agencies and then to the public sector: from research to demonstration to policy.⁵⁹

When voluntary family agencies talked of demonstration and experiment in the 1920s, they meant experimenting with casework. The most common argument for some sort of public-private arrangement was that it would relieve the burden from the private agency in order to "limit its intake and do the intensive experimental work which is a very important contribution which only a private society can make."⁶⁰ As the theory went, once such intensive techniques were proven to have value, the private agencies would then be able to arouse public sentiment to support government provision of such service. However, the Vaile report made it clear that casework as a technique in public welfare

⁵⁷Amos G. Warner, *American Charities: A Study in Philanthropy and Economics* (Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1894), p. 304-305.

⁵⁸Ralph Barrow, "Interpreting Child Welfare Work to the Community--The Private Agency," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work*, 1925, p. 132-136.

⁵⁹"Minutes of Meeting of National Social Work Council," [NSWC] December 4, 1925, Folder 9, Box 2, National Social Welfare Assembly Records [NSWA], SWHA.

⁶⁰"Division of Work Between Public and Private Agencies," p. 16.

would be a long time in coming, and that certain cases “that primarily involve personality problems calling for especially intensive work,” would probably remain the province of private agencies.⁶¹ Most family service agencies at the time did not see themselves in the business of putting themselves out of business. As David Holbrook, secretary of the National Social Work Council, commented that even when government sponsored work was a “going concern,” there would still remain work for voluntary organizations to do.⁶²

Experimenting and demonstration offered a vision of seamless cooperation between voluntary agencies and government, while leaving open-ended the question of what functions public authority might adopt and when. But some doubted whether this accurately captured the public-voluntary dynamic. One survey found few examples of where the “private-experimentation model” was actually practiced. Other voluntary organizations which co-existed with public authority in their field took a less ambitious, but perhaps more realistic view of the possibilities of both private and public agencies. Officials from the National Tuberculosis Association and the National Committee for the Disabled, which collaborated with public health departments and vocational rehabilitation agencies, respectively, found themselves playing simply a supplementary role.⁶³

The need to educate the public about social needs was oft-discussed aspect of this experimental approach. Francis McLean wrote in the early 1920s that “my present belief is that the great function of family societies is to educate local groups of people so that

⁶¹ibid, p. 18.

⁶²NSWC Monthly Meeting transcript, Dec. 5, 1925, Folder 9, Box 2, NSW.

⁶³Frank Bruno, “The Integration of Effort in Theory and Practice by Private and Public Agencies for the Common Good,” *NCSW 1927*, p. 240-246; Charles Hatfield, “Relative Function of Agencies, Viewpoint of the Non-Official Agency,” Dec. 1920, Folder 9, Box 2, NSW; R.C. Branion “Correlation of Public and Private Work for the Handicapped,” *NCSW 1925*, p. 325-327; Keller, p. 191-195.

they may act not only through our societies but through other agencies.” Ruth Taylor, a professional social worker and Deputy Commissioner of Public Welfare of Westchester County, New York, added that the “opportunity for the private agency lies in changing the direction of public opinion,” to help support higher quality work in public welfare agencies. In Providence and Boston, representatives of the family agencies had helped lobby for mothers’ pension bills; in Chicago, private agencies worked with the mothers’ pension bureau to obtain competent staff.⁶⁴ Private agencies could also act as gadflies on public programs. Charles Chute, of the National Probation Association, which had over a decade of experience working with the court system, thought his organization played a dual role as “critic and promoter” of the government agencies it worked with. A prominent example was the New York State Charities Aid Association, a group of voluntary agencies that had played a central role in helping draft and lobby for changes in the state’s Public Welfare Law that called for more preventative work in welfare and more rational administration of local poor relief.⁶⁵

Nonetheless, there remained an air of disdain among many social workers in private agencies for their public agency counterparts. Even prominent voluntary agency leaders admitted that “there has been and still is great need for private agencies to be more cordial to public agencies.” Frank Bane, Commissioner of Public Welfare in Virginia and an early activist in organizing public welfare administrators, recalled that at

⁶⁴ Francis McLean to Edwin Elkund, Jan. 23, 1923, Folder 21, Box 13, FWAA; Ruth Taylor, “The Integration of Effort in Theory and Practice by Private and Public Agencies for the Common Good,” *NCSW* 1927, p. 246-252; Bruno; Leah Feder, “The Relation of Private Case Working Agencies to Programs of Public Welfare,” *Social Forces* (June 1931): 518.

⁶⁵ Charles Chute to Holbrook, Nov. 18, 1925; “Minutes of Meeting of National Social Work Council,” Dec. 4, 1925, both in Folder 9, Box 2, NSW; Elsie Bond, “New York’s New Public Welfare Law,” *Social Service Review* (Sept. 1929): 415-416.

the national social work conventions, the meetings for public welfare officials “always had the back room.” In his eyes, most social workers saw the task of public welfare as somewhere between corruptly political and unskilled labor, “people who have to handle the day-to-day routine dishwashing jobs,” who had neither the time nor ability to do skilled casework.⁶⁶

Other advocates of public welfare questioned the prominence of voluntarism. Isaac Rubinow, a prominent advocate of publicly funded social insurance, submitted an essay to *The Survey*, a social work magazine, attacking the presumptions of private charities, and particularly the Community Chests, to stand in as a substitute for public authority. Titled “Can Private Philanthropy Do It?” Rubinow argued that voluntary institutions simply lacked the capacity to deal with large-scale social problems such as unemployment. However, he believed that the relentless fundraising by Community Chests had portrayed voluntarism as an adequate substitute for meeting the relief needs of communities. “In moments of stress, such as this,” he wrote in September 1929, “it is the inefficient political machinery that has the power (though it sometimes lacks the will) of making emergency appropriations, making loans, and issuing bonds if necessary.” The argument that voluntary methods were more intimate and individualized simply did not hold water, at least on the fundraising side, said Rubinow. Centralized fundraising had become as impersonal and businesslike as the government, while lacking the power to tax; “Voluntary self-taxation is picturesque, but infinitely less effective than the official

⁶⁶ Bane would go on to direct the American Public Welfare Association in the early 1930s, and moved to become the first executive director of the Social Security Board in 1935. Frank Bane, “Public Administration and Public Welfare,” Oral History Interview with James Lieby (University of California Regional Oral History Office, 1965), p. 93-94; David Holbrook to Margaret Rich, July 11, 1928, Folder 30, Box 4, NSWA.

tax collector.” Government should be granted the power to provide relief, and leave private agencies to try “new experiments, new approaches to old problems.”⁶⁷ Even though Rubinow’s argument embraced the rhetoric of experimentalism, his criticism of Chests and whole-hearted embrace of government social provision made his article doubly controversial, and his article had been rejected by the *Survey* when he submitted it to them in 1928.

The Depression and Public-Private Relief Mobilization

Even as Rubinow’s article was making the rounds among social work organizations and periodicals in 1928 and 1929, there were indications that the resources of voluntarism were about to be stretched by another economic recession. While the general awareness of an economic crisis would not dawn until late 1929, voluntary social agencies felt the ripples of instability well over a year before. In New York City, family agencies noticed an increase in applications for relief between 11 and 17 percent in early 1928, the Municipal Lodging House saw a rise of 15 percent in transient men seeking shelter, and employment services had a harder time placing people. *The Survey* noted reports in January 1928 of rising unemployment in cities across the country. But, as William Bremer has noted, “the veil of 1920s prosperity hung over them,” and most saw it simply as a recession along the lines of those of 1914-1915, and 1921-1922.

⁶⁷ Isaac M. Rubinow, “Can Private Philanthropy Do It?” *Social Service Review* (Sept. 1929): 361-394. The *Survey* agonized for months over whether to publish Rubinow’s article, sent it out for comments, and finally decided it was too incendiary after protests from Community Chest leaders and several voluntary organizations, though more reformist social workers approved of it. It was accepted at the *Social Service Review*, published by the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service, which was making a practice of illustrating the limits of voluntarism. See William W. Bremer, *Depression Winters: New York Social Workers and the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), p. 28.

Nonetheless, Linton Swift of the AAOFSW took the opportunity to call again for looking into public financing of unemployment relief.⁶⁸

At the Associated Charities of Wilmington, Delaware (a member of the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work), Ethelda Mullen, a social worker and general secretary of the agency, told her board in January 1928 that their figures for relief were higher than they had been in some time, and that nearly half of the people they were aiding were employable heads of families who could not find jobs. In March, she pointedly observed that the unemployment problem “which the Chamber of Commerce assures us is not acute,” was throwing able-bodied wage earners, not drifters but “Wilmington men with families,” at the mercy of the Associated Charities. She remarked that she had heard a talk at the national conference of social work about the “unavoidable” cycles of employment, and the example of Minneapolis, where the private society had limited its intake to specialized cases and let the public take over most of the relief. Even when the burden eased during the summer and fall, Mullen put the case to her Board that much of the staff’s time was taken up “tiding over and patching up” families. Other cities had found ways to lighten the burden of the voluntary society so its workers could be released for more intensive efforts. Was the Associated to be simply “the relief pocketbook of the community” she asked? When the intake at the agency skyrocketed in January 1929 to the highest level since the early 1920s, with a large number of families the agency had never seen or had not seen since the depression of

⁶⁸ Bremer, p. 28; Linton Swift, “The Relief Problem in Family Social Work,” *The Family* (Mar. 1929): 7.

1921-22, Mullen again suggested that unemployment might be the proper responsibility of public authorities.⁶⁹

In 1928 and 1929, the Associated's experience seemed to the board of directors to be simply a somewhat more acute version of seasonal shifts in employment. The board, dominated by the du Pont family and its employees, had long embraced an ethic of voluntarism made even more plausible by their immense wealth in a small state. Pierre S. du Pont, the most active of the family, had almost single-handedly financed a school building program that modernized the state's school system in the late 1910s and early 1920s; A. I. du Pont had started a system of old-age pensions out of his own pocket; while T. Coleman du Pont had helped sponsor a state road-building project. The Board also boasted a living emblem of the power of voluntary action: Emily Bissell, who, as a Red Cross volunteer in 1907, coined the idea of the Christmas Seals campaign that would raise money to support a tuberculosis sanatorium, and that had provided the fundraising basis for the National Tuberculosis Association to emerge. Moreover, as both Mullen and the Board knew, the political will to create a comprehensive public welfare department did not exist. The Trustees of the Poor for New Castle County distributed some outdoor relief in both Wilmington and the surrounding county, but it was meager and lacked any "supervision" of the families receiving it. The city made small appropriations to the Associated Charities, \$534 of the \$2,842 the agency provided in relief in January 1929. The Associated had been the court of last resort for decades, occasionally in tandem with public authority. It had provided relief during the recession of 1914 and 1915, though the city had supplied some of the funds; on the other hand, during the 1921-22 recession, the

⁶⁹ Board of Directors Minutes, Associated Charities of Wilmington, Jan. 17, 1928; Feb. 21, 1928; May 15, 1928; Nov. 20, 1928; Feb. 19, 1929, in Children and Families First Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

Associated Charities and its Du Pont sponsors had financed the make-work program run by the Parks Department.⁷⁰

In Baltimore, similar signs of distress evidenced themselves at the Family Welfare Association of Baltimore (another AAOFSW member). The Baltimore agency had a distinguished history; some of the leading figures in late nineteenth century social work had been involved with the agency in its original incarnation as the Charity Organization Society of Baltimore: John Glenn, who would direct the Russell Sage Foundation from its inception in 1907 until 1931, had chaired the executive committee of the COS from 1887 to 1907; Amos Warner, whose *American Charities* was a seminal text for charity reformers, served as its general secretary from 1887 to 1889; Mary Richmond had started her career at the agency in the early 1890s. In the 1920s, Baltimore had no public outdoor relief, and the FWA, as the only citywide, non-sectarian agency was the principal resource for organized assistance—though the Bureau of Catholic Charities and the Hebrew Benevolent Union dealt with most of their co-religionists. Though Baltimore's economy appeared relatively prosperous, with 103 new manufacturing plants opening in the city in the 1920s, demands on the agency due to unemployment, "in the so-called prosperous years of the 1920s," had steadily mounted. In mid-1927, a slump in employment strained the agency's finances, and the local Community Fund was forced to meet the agency's deficits. As relief spending mounted in early 1928, the Fund refused to appropriate any more and told the agency to seek help from the City. Mayor William

⁷⁰ Board of Directors, ACW, Mar. 21, 1922; "The First Fifty Years: Records and Reminiscences of the Personalities and Activities to Which Wilmington Owes Its Progress in Family Relief Work," (Wilmington, De.: The Family Society, 1934). This document claims that 1914 to 1915 was the only time the organization received public funds, though the directors minutes show it was administering public funds in the late 1920s; Carol Hoffecker, *Corporate Capital: Wilmington in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), p. 101;

Broening also refused to help until all voluntary resources were exhausted, and in for two weeks in late April and early May, the agency closed its doors and turned away 136 families seeking assistance for unemployment—whereupon the city's Board of Estimates granted the agency an emergency appropriation. In 1929, the annual report of the FWA called for unemployment relief to be taken over by taxpayers.⁷¹

The agencies charged by city fathers to embody voluntary welfare were, by the late 1920s, seeking to escape that responsibility. In both Wilmington and Baltimore, the events of 1928 set in motion a pattern that would define public-private relief giving in the early Depression. In hundreds of cities, civic leaders promoted voluntary institutions of all sorts as the principal source of relief. Building on past experience with earlier recessions, and taking their cue from President Herbert Hoover, the political and social work establishment of many cities sought to put the existing apparatus of social institutions to work in the emergency. While the face of the effort in the first several years of the Depression was voluntary, local situations revealed a dizzying array of public-private institutional arrangements jerry-built to meet what most assumed would be a temporary, if severe, economic downturn. It also revealed the eagerness of many voluntary agencies to rid themselves of the burden of relief, and to encourage public responsibility for the unemployed.

The literature on the Great Depression has given a well-known story of the failure of the national government to come to terms with the scope and severity of the

⁷¹ Board of Managers, Family Welfare Association of Baltimore, June 29, 1927; Sept. 8, 1927; Feb. 17, 1928; Mar. 23, 1928, May 25, 1928, all 2:27, BFCS; Anna Ward, "A Century of Family Social Work," p. 6, 1:9, BFCS; Grace Sperrow, "History of the Baltimore Family and Children's Society," [n.d.], 1:26, BFCS; Jo Ann Argersinger, *Toward a New Deal in Baltimore* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 5.

Depression, and the ideological resistance of the Hoover Administration to bringing the monetary power of the federal government to bear.⁷² While Hoover ultimately was forced to put the resources of the federal government to work, the Roosevelt Administration and Congress made a more durable commitment of federal resources to building permanent public mechanisms to deal with the problems of unemployment and poverty. Moreover, a generation of scholars has produced a rich body of studies that focus on the impact of the Depression and the New Deal at the local level, including the vital role that federal intervention played in relieving failing local efforts to deal with the Depression.⁷³

In the standard political history of the New Deal, the voluntary sector is chained to the story of Hoover, his hubris in the face of the Depression mirrored in their own; his failure and loss to Roosevelt paralleled by the depletion of voluntary resources and collapse of voluntary organizations. Roosevelt's ascendance opens the era of public welfare, and pushes aside voluntarism.⁷⁴ While scholars of Hoover have shown that his particular brand of voluntarism was far from reactionary, and others have tried to soften the sharpness of the transition in relief policies from Hoover to Roosevelt, the

⁷² Hawley; Albert Romasco, *The Poverty of Abundance: Hoover, the Nation, the Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); Jordan Schwartz, *Interregnum of Despair: Hoover, Congress and the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

⁷³ Arthur Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt, v. 1: The Crisis of the Old Order* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957) best typifies this stance. State and local studies useful for exploring the transition from Hoover to Roosevelt include John Braeman, Robert Bremner, David Brody, eds. *The New Deal: The State and Local Levels* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975); Bernard Sternsher, ed. *Hitting Home: The Great Depression in Town and Country* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970); Charles Trout, *Boston, The Great Depression, and the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Roger Biles, *Memphis in the Great Depression* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986); Edward LaMonte, *Politics and Welfare in Birmingham, 1900-1975* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995); Argersinger.

⁷⁴ The most recent example of this is the richly detailed study by Lizabeth Cohen, *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

understanding of the rôle of voluntary social welfare institutions during this period has remained fairly static.⁷⁵

The examination of the work and attitudes of voluntary family agencies during the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations will reveal a more nuanced interpretation of the role of voluntarism. First, it will show that voluntary family agencies, working on the front lines of relief in most major cities in the United States, were among the first to call for assistance from public funds to meet the severe unemployment emergency. While it was not until 1931 that most voluntary sector social workers advocated the use of federal funds, they had nonetheless left behind the notion that voluntary institutions themselves could cope with severe economic dislocation. Second, it will document the deep involvement of private sector social work in performing public functions during the Depression. Family agencies in many cities acted as the de facto emergency assistance agencies; when separate relief granting organizations were created, both private and public, they were often linked to voluntary agencies or run by voluntary personnel. When the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Roosevelt's emergency aid bureau, dictated that federal relief money be administered by public authorities, voluntary institutions in many cities provided the administrative capacity that allowed the new public agencies to start their work—including, in several cases, a wholesale conversion of the family agency into the public welfare department. Finally, while public funds for

⁷⁵ Hawley, cited above, led the "Hoover revisionist" school; Jeff Singleton, also cited earlier, has argued that the transition in relief policy from Hoover to Roosevelt was not as sharp as traditional accounts hold. One recent exception to the treatment of voluntary associations is David Beito, *From Mutual Aid to Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890 to 1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Beito demonstrates the critical role that fraternal societies played as social welfare institutions, and demonstrates that they continue in this role until the end of the Depression. He spends relatively little time examining the transformation of fraternalism with the expansion of the welfare state, though he laments the shift.

relief far exceeded the amounts spent by private agencies, the voluntary sector continued to be deeply involved in and associated with the provision of relief. Federal programs underwent “frequent shifts in policy” that “served to emphasize the uncertainty and confusion in the total relief picture,” complained the Family Welfare Association of America in 1939.⁷⁶ It was not until late in the 1930s when most voluntary family agencies could envision other preoccupations besides the provision of aid.

The winter of 1929-1930, more than the stock market crash of October 1929, signaled the magnitude of the economic downturn to family agencies. In Toledo, Ohio, where the city’s largest employer cut its payroll from 26,000 to 6,000 in late 1929, the family society’s case load had increased so that in January, 1930, it had 2,727 applications for aid, compared to 1,000 a year earlier, and was making “no pretense” of being able to keep up a “high grade of social casework” under such a load. The national association of family agencies, in the midst of a name change to the Family Welfare Association of America, assigned Josephine Brown to the task of conducting surveys of member institutions on how cities were meeting the problem. The results, reported to social workers nationally, were that caseloads had increased roughly 200 percent between January 1929 and January 1930.⁷⁷

In Delaware, anxiety at the Associated Charities increased more slowly. Mullen was still able to say that unemployment was not the prime problem they faced in November 1929, but “subtler things” that frequently led to economic problems by

⁷⁶ Board of Directors, Family Welfare Association of America, “Co-ordination of Federal, State and Local Public Assistance,” Dec. 9, 1939, Folder 34, Box 32, FSAA.

⁷⁷ Rich, p. 109-110; Board of Director’s Minutes, Family Welfare Association of America, Jan. 22-23, 1930, Folder 6, Box 4, FSAA; “Unemployment and Family Societies,” *Social Service Review* (Mar. 1930): 98-99.

families. By early 1930, she noted a steady increase in caseload, and an “unprecedented” increase in relief. While leading businessmen confidently described improving business conditions in the spring of 1930, Mullen bluntly informed her Board that “contrary to the general thinking of the community, and perhaps the Board of Directors themselves, conditions are not showing much improvement and the burden of the community’s dependent citizens is falling most heavily on the Associated Charities.” Nor did things improve over the summer; the caseload in July 1930 was 43 percent larger than a year earlier, and the relief expenditures had doubled. The agency’s money was going primarily for food, a mix of grocery orders to be redeemed at local stores and direct cash relief, but with an increasing amount for help with rents as landlords grew less patient with delinquents. New Castle County had cut its outdoor relief, and Wilmington had no public agency to turn to. “The private society cannot carry the burden of unemployment alone,” Mullen told the Board.⁷⁸

Wilmington then shifted to the model of exhortation by civic leaders that characterized many cities in this period. Mayor F. K. Forrest convened an Emergency Unemployment Committee in December 1930, stacked with Du Ponts, and chaired by Frank McHugh, a personal secretary to Pierre Du Pont. The committee set out to raise money for relief from private sources, as well as to solicit work projects for the unemployed. The Du Ponts again donated time and provided employment, with Pierre hiring additional workers at his estate. The committee spent \$279,506 in the first three months of work, the bulk on wages for work relief, but with direct relief distributed through the Associated Charities, the Salvation Army, and other voluntary agencies.

⁷⁸Board of Directors, ACW, Nov. 5, 1929; Feb. 18, 1930; May 20, 1930; Sept. 23, 1930; Oct. 28, 1930; Hoffecker, p. 101.

As the committee terminated its work in the spring of 1931, it turned relief responsibility back to the Associated Charities—which in January had changed its name to the Family Society of Wilmington to de-emphasize its connection with relief. However, it had created a separate Unemployment Relief Unit to deal with the applicants seeking nothing more than relief. Despite a mass meeting in June, an appeal printed in the newspaper, and a mailing to 3000 potential donors, it was almost broke by the end of July. Lammot Du Pont, chair of the Society's finance committee, had to write to 200 of the wealthiest citizens in the state in order to raise the \$35,000 that the Society estimated it needed for August and September. By October, the Society had helped about 1900 applicants with \$70,853 in relief. Mullen estimated that about half of the applicants were "Negroes," and believed that almost all the cases they helped would take work if they could find it. Despite the fragile financing of the city's chief source of relief, both officials of the Emergency Unemployment Committee and Delaware's Governor, Clayton Buck, proclaimed that Delaware was successfully providing for its own.⁷⁹

By the fall, it was obvious that the problems had not ebbed. A new mayor in Wilmington, Frank Sparks, created a new organization in early September, the Employment and Relief Committee, which again focused on finding make-work jobs, and raising money for the Society to distribute to unemployables—financed this time through a combination of solicitation to large donors and a wider appeal to workers to donate one percent of their paychecks. Pierre Du Pont, having weathered a season of wringing money out of his friends, family, and his own pocket, despaired of the

⁷⁹ Board of Directors, Family Society of Wilmington, Jan. 20, 1931; Ethelda Mullen, Annual Report, FSW, Oct. 27, 1931; Barry Plimmer, "Voluntarism in Crisis: An Exploration of the Effects of the Great Depression in Delaware, 1929-1938," (Ph.D., University of Hull, 1996), p. 12-17; Hoffecker, p. 102-104.

likelihood of raising enough money. He wrote to Buck in September that Wilmington needed help; individuals could take care of the “charitable work” but the state needed to appropriate money for work relief. The state was ultimately forced to float a \$1 million bond for road construction projects, and Wilmington did the same for \$400,000, but the legislature steadfastly refused to appropriate money for any direct relief. This the Mayor’s Commission raised on its own, distributing it through the Family Society at a rate of \$5000 per week at the end of 1931, as well as through the Salvation Army, and the Traveler’s Aid Society. From November 1931 to June 1932, the combined total of voluntary, municipal, and state expenditures was \$1.9 million on both direct and work relief, \$1.4 million of which went to Wilmington and New Castle County, and was drawn almost evenly from private and public sources. Private solicitation continued throughout 1932, but returns grew smaller and smaller, and the city finally had to be bailed out with \$75,000 appropriated by a reluctant state legislature. Even so, the relief did not go far enough. Mullen reported having to turn away several dozen families for lack of funds, and worried about low levels of relief—as did the newly formed Unemployment Council of unemployed men, which unsuccessfully presented demands for higher relief allotments to the Mayor’s Committee in August.⁸⁰

A similar pattern of quasi-voluntarism that leaned heavily on the private family agency occurred in Baltimore, though on a grander scale than in Wilmington. The Family Welfare Association reported an increase of 33 percent in applications in January and February of 1930, and heavy relief expenditures, “but not alarmingly so.” The alarms went off that summer, when an “unseasonable” increase of relief pushed the Association

⁸⁰Board of Directors, FSW, Dec. 15, 1931, May 17, 1932, Oct. 25, 1932; Plimmer, p. 18-33.

into deficit, with no promise of help from the tapped-out Community Fund, itself in debt. A threat to refuse further applications elicited an appropriation of \$10,000 from the Board of Estimates to the three major casework agencies (the FWA, Jewish Social Service Bureau and the Bureau of Catholic Charities), but it was barely a drop in the bucket. The FWA found itself in December “in a rather helpless position because of its lack of funds. We are now giving inadequate relief to families whom we are now assisting, we are refusing assistance to all who can possibly get help from any other source, and we are not accepting even for investigation all the applications which come to us.” The situation deteriorated further in early 1931, with breadlines forming, the Police Department discontinuing its own relief program, and the FWA reporting that it was now handling 80 percent of the unemployment cases of the city, with the 1859 families under its care in January 1931, more than double the 865 of the year before.⁸¹

The creation of the Citizen’s Emergency Relief Committee in February 1931, a civic group charged with raising emergency funds, eased the situation only somewhat. With the prospect of having to absorb the cases the police had dropped, the FWA created a separate Unemployment Relief unit to handle cases that did not require casework, and added 24 extra workers, but even with the infusion of \$8000 a week from the CERC they were still struggling to meet their payroll and were forced to borrow against their endowment in the spring. The \$300,000 the committee initially raised evaporated quickly, and the city was forced to appropriate more funds to continue relief; the FWA threatened to shut down again in the fall, reporting a workload three to four times that of

⁸¹ Board of Managers, FWAB, Mar. 21, 1930, Oct. 31, 1930, Dec. 12, 1930, Jan. 7, 1931, Feb. 27, 1931, 2:27, FCSB; Argersinger, p. 22-24; Dorothy Brown and Elizabeth McKeown, *The Poor Belong To Us: Catholic Charities and American Welfare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 159-161.

a year prior. Relief here too was inadequate, and with diminishing funds, the FWA cut back food budgets in early 1932. This elicited protests from relief recipients, particularly those organized by Communists in “Negro districts” where 41 percent of the population was receiving relief from the FWA. The FWA reported that some of its workers had had “unpleasant experiences” with irate clients, and requested a police officer be stationed at its district offices.⁸²

The deterioration of the relief situation and the FWA grew more intense in 1932. In January and February, the agency distributed \$362,000, and predicted expenditures of \$2 million for the year. With the CERC broke, Mayor Thomas Jackson, who had delayed aiding the private agencies, finally assured them short-term aid from the city. By the end of March, the city had assumed full responsibility for financing the FWA’s unemployment work; this arrangement, municipal financing but private agency administration, held until September 1933. The agency’s caseload continued to mount, with reports of industries laying off workers and sending them directly to the FWA to cash in on the contributions to the Community Fund the plants had made in the past. “Any publicity” about relief brought new applications. The FWA’s total yearly caseload had increased from 6,543 in 1930 to 12,837 in 1931 to 27,214 in 1932; relief expenditures went up from \$173,437 to \$614,355 to \$3.3 million. The city went into deficit by spending on relief, backed by a pledge by Gov. Albert Ritchie to float a state bond to reimburse the city. The Governor and the Legislature dawdled, though, in early

⁸² Board of Managers, FWAB, Feb. 27, 1931, Mar. 27, 1931, Oct. 20, 1931, 2:27; Jan. 22, 1932, 3:27; Argersinger, p. 25. In Cleveland, the Council of the Unemployed was a “serious, widespread problem” for the private agency responsible for the city’s relief, with protests focused on inadequate relief allotments and payment of grocery orders, rather than cash, for work relief; New York and Chicago’s private agencies also faced mass protest from organized groups of the unemployed. Waite, 263-265; Minutes, Milford Conference, Jan. 15, 1933, Folder 7, Box 1, NSWA.

1933, until Jackson, facing protests from taxpayers, proposed a city budget with no relief at all, prompting Ritchie to make good on his promise to back the city up.⁸³

This pattern of falling back first on voluntary institutions, then mobilizing civic leaders to bolster those institutions, and finally buttressing them with municipal and state funds as voluntary funds ran thin, occurred in many cities across the country from 1929 to 1933. While these two mid-Atlantic cities, with strong traditions of voluntarism and little public welfare infrastructure, were striking examples, others could be found. Cleveland and St. Louis, as well as smaller cities such as Topeka, Kansas, and Ann Arbor, Michigan, also centered their efforts on the administrative machinery of the local charitable establishment. Philadelphia, another city without public outdoor relief in the 1920s, had followed a similar story line; the Family Welfare Association had reached its capacity in 1929, and the city was forced to make emergency appropriations to the charity to handle the caseload of the unemployed. A citizen's committee headed by the chair of the local Federation of Jewish Charities decided to build an emergency network through local voluntary agencies, with money raised by a Committee on Unemployment Relief headed by Drexel & Co. banker Henry Gates Lloyd. The well-integrated system of voluntary agencies, that distributed aid through their local branches, gained national attention as an example of the possibilities of voluntary emergency relief, but the Lloyd Committee, despite continued heroic fundraising efforts, simply could not meet the mounting need of accelerating unemployment. The conservative banker Lloyd found himself advocating direct federal relief in 1932. In Chicago, the Cook County Bureau of Public Welfare co-existed alongside the non-sectarian United Charities (an FWAA

⁸³ Board of Managers, FWAB, Mar. 18, 1932, May 27, 1932, July 29, 1932; Sperrow, p. 46-63; Ward, p. 6-7; Argersinger, p. 27-29.

member) and an elaborate network of organized charities and self-help groups. The city funneled \$15 million in emergency funds through established voluntary agencies in 1931 and 1932, but by the end of 1932, the city department was carrying 75 percent of the relief load. With private funds depleted, Edward Ryerson, the steel magnate and local philanthropist who had spearheaded the citywide fund drives, called first on the Illinois legislature and then directly to Hoover for relief for the city.⁸⁴

Such reliance on private family agencies did not define the national experience. In other cities, private agencies split the relief load initially or eventually with public institutions, either pre-existing municipal or county welfare organizations, or newly created emergency unemployment relief organizations. In St. Paul, the United Charities wrangled with the local Board of Public Welfare to get the public body to issue more than meager grocery orders, but the two institutions grew closer as the crisis deepened, with the private agency offering to share its district offices with the public agency. Fort Worth, Texas, "amalgamated" its private and public organizations into one quasi-public agency, "for reasons of expediency."⁸⁵ Some cities, notably Boston and Detroit, had relatively well-developed public welfare institutions which carried the overwhelming majority of

⁸⁴ Bonnie Fox Schwartz, "Unemployment Relief in Philadelphia, 1930-1932: A Study of the Depression's Impact on Voluntarism," in Bernard Sternsher, ed., *Hitting Home: The Great Depression in Town and City* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970): 60-84; Cohen, 218-227; David Katzman, "Ann Arbor: Depression City," in Sternsher, p. 47-59; "Inter-Agency Relationships," Oct. 1931, Folder 2, Box 32; "Big City Conference on Unemployment," Jan. 29-30, 1932, Folder 6, Box 7, both FSAA; "Municipal Departments of Welfare," *Social Service Review* (Sept. 1932): 511-512; Florence Waite, *A Warm Friend for the Spirit: a History of the Family Service Association of Cleveland and its Forebears* (Cleveland: Family Service Association of Cleveland, 1960), 232-282.

⁸⁵ Mark Haidet, *A Legacy of Leadership and Service: A History of Family Service of Greater St. Paul* (St. Paul: Family Service of Greater St. Paul, 1984), p. 29-32; "Minutes of Milford Conference," Dec. 9, 1932, Box 1, Folder 6, NSWA. In St. Paul, the executive of the United Charities characterized public welfare in the city prior to the Depression as "a very fine, elderly lady, Nellie Van Duzen, sitting on a high stool behind a wicker screen passing out \$5.00 and \$10.00 grocery orders. That was it." A. A. Heckman Oral History, p. 8, SWHA.

direct relief cases, thought the family agencies were also supplying monetary assistance.⁸⁶ In many rural areas and small cities and towns, neither public nor private institutions were capable of even starting to handle the crisis of the Depression. The *Social Service Review*, published by the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago and committed to developing public welfare, published a series of articles in 1931 and 1932 documenting the breakdown or absence of relief in areas with little welfare presence, public or voluntary. "We cannot and should not expect these private organizations to handle alone a problem far beyond their capacity because of their limited resources," concluded Frank Bane of the Virginia Board of Public Welfare and the American Public Welfare Association.⁸⁷

This ran contrary to the vision of President Herbert Hoover, who hoped first and foremost that voluntary resources could meet the challenge of the Depression emergency. Hoover, as many scholars have shown, was not a voluntarist of the old order; he envisioned an active role for public authority in national life. His vision of an "associative state," as his philosophy has been termed, developed out of his work in providing emergency relief in post-World War One Europe (a task that gained him the admiration of many social workers, including Jane Addams), and his experience as Secretary of Commerce in the Harding administration. Simply put, Hoover acknowledged that the modern, industrial, urbanized society of the United States in the early twentieth century needed to develop

⁸⁶ Rose Porter, "A Study of Nine Public Agencies," July 1932, in Pathfinding Committee Folder, Box 14, FSAA; Charles H. Trout, *Boston, the Great Depression, and the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 31-33, 85-87.

⁸⁷ Frank Bane, "A State Program of Public Welfare Work Including County and Rural Work," *Social Service Review* (Sept. 1931): 382-383; Wilma Walker, "Distress in a Southern Illinois County," *SSR* (Dec. 1931): 558-581; Grace Abbott, "Improvement in Rural Public Relief: The Lesson of the Coal Mining Communities," *SSR* (June 1932): 193-205.

the institutional resources to manage an increasing complex economy and social life.

But rather than turning to state institutions which he viewed as coercive and ridden with politics, he instead believed that voluntary associations of businesses, professionals, farmers, and laborers—all of whom were organizing on a national scale with increasing rapidity in the 1920s—could be put to public service, coordinated and exhorted by a lean national state. Such an institutional arrangement would stress flexibility, efficiency, and expertise, as opposed to the entrenched and bloated public bureaucracies that Hoover associated with national government.⁸⁸

The emergence of national associations of voluntary agencies helped convince Hoover that such a philosophy extended into the field of social welfare. Hoover was most familiar with the American Red Cross, which, though a non-governmental agency, had a Congressional charter that gave it exclusive responsibility for assistance during wartime and disasters. Thus, during the massive flooding that devastated the Mississippi Valley in 1927, Hoover used the Commerce Department to help coordinate flood relief with the Red Cross, whose national offices were in Washington, D.C. The Red Cross, whose strength was rooted in the wide geographic distribution of its chapters, appeared to Hoover as an ideal model of how wide-scale problems could be solved by the mobilization of local resources through national organizations. The fact that local chapters in the South were dominated by planters and local elites, whose administration

⁸⁸Ellis Hawley, "Herbert Hoover, the Commerce Secretariat, and the Vision of the 'Associative State,' 1921-1928," *Journal of American History* (1974): 116-140; Albert Romasco, *The Poverty of Abundance: Hoover, the Nation, and the Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 10-23.

of relief was driven more by keeping the local labor pool hungry to work than by humanitarian concerns, appeared to be of little concern to Hoover.⁸⁹

The organizational advances in voluntary social welfare during the 1920s certainly gave the appearance, to someone of Hoover's inclinations, that associationalism might be up to the task of meeting the Depression. The expansion of the community chest movement, in particular, epitomized the type of private organization that embodied the associational approach: a businesslike, systematized, rationalized, and apparently efficient coordination of local fundraising that would expand capacity without involving the state. To what degree community chest giving represented "voluntarism" was a point of some contention—even leaders of the chests described them as "semi-public," and the pressure to give under a fund-drive bore more resemblance to taxation than donation.⁹⁰ But chests, which had a national organization, the Association of Community Chests and Councils, certainly looked like the ideal-type of national voluntarism. The existence of other federations of local voluntary agencies, such as the national organizations of the YMCA, YWCA, Travelers Aid, Visiting Nurses Association of America, and the Family Welfare Association of America (most based in New York City), also gave the appearance of national-scale voluntary capacity along the lines of the trade associations so crucial to Hoover's vision.

This point was driven home as Hoover contemplated his response to the Depression in 1930. As with many people, including most social workers, Hoover assumed it was another temporary economic downturn along the lines of 1921-1922, and interpreted it

⁸⁹ Hawley, "Associative State," p. 135; Nan Woodruff, *As Rare As Rain: Federal Relief in the Great Southern Drought, 1930-1931* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 10, 95.

⁹⁰ "Secretary's Memorandum on Conference on Relations Between National Social Work Agencies and Community Chests," May 6, 1929, Folder 90, Box 12, NSWA Supp. 1.

through the lens of disaster relief rather than as a cyclical element of a modern economy. As a drought in the Mississippi Valley compounded the economic problems of the region that summer, local Red Cross chapters were identified as the point of relief, and, for the first time, cash assistance (though reluctantly and sparingly). The issue of drought relief and general unemployment relief became intertwined—first in the drought regions, where it became less clear whether distress had emanated from the drought or from the general economic downturn. It also became entangled in Hoover's thinking about meeting the needs of the unemployed that fall. Hoover's first move to address the Depression had been to set up the President's Emergency Committee for Employment in October, 1930, headed by Arthur Woods, whose mission was to do no more than coordinate and spread information among organizations at the local level—turning to organizations such as the FWAA for information from their local sources. With mounting demands for federal action in Congress, though, Hoover contemplated initiating a national fundraising campaign through the Red Cross for both drought relief and unemployment. David Holbrook of the National Social Welfare Council complained that “the present quarrel with Congress is forcing the President to consider plans for ‘doing something’ and that his mind reverts to earlier experiences....”⁹¹ However, the Red Cross itself was extremely reluctant to engage in providing outright relief, and was unwilling to take on the mantle of federal responsibility, revealing, as David Hamilton observed, “the enormous disparity between the nature of the Red Cross and Hoover's conception of it.” When Hoover refused to consider direct federal appropriations for food relief to the

⁹¹ Romasco, p. 144-149; Woodruff, p. 39-41; David Holbrook to Howard Braucher, Dec. 15, 1930, Folder 43, Box 6, NSWA, Supp. 1; Tracy McGregor to Swift, Oct. 13, 1930; Fred Croxton to Swift, May 26, 1931, both Folder 12, Box 13, FSAA.

drought areas, Democrats in Congress proposed a \$25 million grant to the Red Cross to be distributed for food. Hoover had urged the organization to undertake the conduct of direct relief with its own funds, but opposed subsidizing it directly. As House Majority Leader James Tilson, speaking for the administration, said, "Once the Red Cross is destroyed, as it must inevitably be by a Federal dole, and our local charities paralyzed, as they will be when the Federal Government takes over responsibility for charitable relief, the appropriations that must follow as a consequence of such a policy would now stagger belief." Red Cross officials, siding with Hoover, rejected the offer, infuriating the stricken states.⁹²

The leaders of many national voluntary social work agencies, particularly the Family Welfare Association of America, had abandoned the Hoover Administration's appeal to voluntarism. The winter of 1930-1931 was a clear turning point. As the winter deepened, and agencies such as those in Wilmington and Baltimore teetered on insolvency, it became clear to most working within such agencies that the public sector would have to step in. In New York, as William Bremer has observed, it took social workers "about ten weeks," that winter, "to abandon a cherished doctrine: that private philanthropy should care for the poor." The New York City Welfare Council, representing many voluntary agencies in the city, issued a plea in late February for city funding.⁹³ Some, including the national staff of the FWAA, had arrived at that conclusion even earlier. While the increasing relief needs of the 1920s had strained and limited FWAA agencies' attempts to sharpen their casework skills, and had put the notion of

⁹² Tilson quoted in Woodruff, p. 94; see p. 66-95, *passim*; Foster Rhea Dulles, *The American Red Cross: A History* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 280-285; David Hamilton, "Herbert Hoover and the Great Drought of 1930," *Journal of American History* (Mar. 1982): 861.

⁹³ Bremer, p. 35.

public responsibility on the table, the Depression crisis made it a necessity. Linton Swift reported to other voluntary agency heads after a trip through the western states in the spring of 1930 that “the outstanding impression that I do carry is of the absolutely unmanageable load which this unemployment situation and any similar situation in the future is going to place upon private social agencies.” Frank Bruno, a social work professor at the Washington University School of Social Work in St. Louis, wrote to Florence Hutsinpillar of the federal Children’s Bureau that her doubts about the support of private agencies for public action were “historical but not real. I know of no outstanding family agency which to-day is not pressing hard for some sort of public family welfare work.” Crediting the change more to the crush of the Depression rather than “a philosophical consideration of the two fields,” he concluded, “winning the rank and file who had followed rather unthinkingly the fear of public outdoor relief expressed a generation ago, has been dissipated more by fact than by theory. However, it has been done....” As one observer noted, “Twenty years ago, of course, public outdoor relief was disliked by all private agencies and apparently as far as I can make out the private agencies have now changed their position.”⁹⁴ Voluntary agency leaders had begun charting a course toward embracing public agencies in the 1920s; the Depression forced their membership into line behind them.

In 1931 the question for the voluntary sector was not whether public relief funding, but what sort. While voluntary agencies had begun to realize prior to the Depression that their fate was linked to public welfare, for the most part they envisioned “public” as local government, or at best state. Their reluctance to endorse the idea of

⁹⁴ Monthly Meeting, NSWA, April 4, 1930, Folder 53; May 4, 1930, Folder 54, Box 6, NSWA; Frank Bruno to Florence Hutsinpillar, Sept. 9, 1930, Folder 12, Box 16, FSAA.

Federal relief in the early Depression was not too far from Hoover's own. In the spring of 1931 at the National Conference of Social Work, Swift agreed that he preferred local or state action to federal, but "sharply" disagreed with Hoover over solving the problem through voluntary action. Harry Lurie of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research, a consistent advocate of public welfare, argued that federal relief was vital. A year later, the *Social Service Review* identified the summer of 1931 as the turning point for social work in acknowledging that local funds could not meet "even the most elementary relief needs."⁹⁵ The voluntary fund drives that fall underscored that point. Under the aegis of a national "Welfare and Relief Mobilization," community chests raised a new record of \$101,377,537, a 25 percent increase over that raised in 1928, and set aside an unprecedented amount for direct relief. Still, a quarter of all the Chests had failed to reach their target amounts by 10 percent or more, and those targets represented only estimates of what they thought they could raise—not actual need. Relief expenditures had increased 400 percent since 1928, and were obviously, to most, outside of the scope of private resources.⁹⁶

A meeting of the National Social Work Council in October gathered the leaders of all the major national voluntary organizations to discuss federal unemployment relief and to try to develop a proposal to that would employ good casework. David Holbrook of the NSWC characterized the sentiment as a split between "'the grand opportunity' versus the 'last resort' crowd." Monsignor John O'Grady, executive secretary of the National

⁹⁵ Harry Lurie, "The Drift to Public Relief," *NCSW 1931*, p. 211-222; Linton Swift, "The Future of Public Social Work in America," *NCSW 1931*, p. 451-454; "Federal Relief and the RFC," *Social Service Review* (Dec. 1932): 629-630.

⁹⁶ Scott Cutlip, *Fund Raising in the United States: Its Role in America's Philanthropy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965), p. 213; United Way of America, *People and Events: A History of the United Way* (Alexandria, Va.: United Way of America, 1977), p. 65; Romasco, p. 157.

Conference on Catholic Charities, urged the group not to convene the study committee so typical of social work but to hammer out a concrete proposal—and indicated his preference for a federally supported work relief program. Private aid was “pitifully” small, said O’Grady.⁹⁷ Out of this meeting was formed an informal “Social Work Conference on Federal Action for Unemployment,” with a steering committee drawing on the leadership of the national agencies, chaired by Swift, given the task of documenting the desperation of local conditions and the insufficiency of private resources. The group’s organization was well-timed. Senator Edward Costigan of Colorado was in the middle of gathering information for a federal unemployment relief bill he was drafting. In October he had his staff contact Prentice Murphy, a prominent figure in the Child Welfare League of America and frequent member of federal commissions, for help. Murphy directed Costigan to the social work group, and in early November, the social workers began meeting Costigan, Senator Robert LaFollette Jr., and Congressman David Lewis about federal relief. In the next few months, Swift, Walter West of the American Association of Social Workers, William Hodson of the Welfare Council of New York, and Allen Burns of the Association of Community Chests and Councils of America traveled so frequently to Washington to consult, to arrange testimony on the relief bills introduced by Costigan and LaFollette in late 1931, and to testify themselves, that they became informally known as the “Four Horsemen.” Though the LaFollette-Costigan bill was defeated in early 1932, primarily due to opposition to distributing relief through the Children’s Bureau, the testimony clearly laid the ground for a similar bill sponsored by Senator Robert Wagner. Wagner’s bill, debated in the

⁹⁷ NSWC Monthly Meeting, Oct. 1931, Folder 68, Box 7, NSWA; on O’Grady and federal relief, see Brown and McKeown, 161-163.

spring as major cities such as Chicago faced relief shutdowns, ultimately broke Hoover's resistance to federal aid and began providing federal assistance through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.⁹⁸

The RFC did not displace private agencies from the role they played in administering relief. Indeed, though states were required to form agencies to receive relief grants from the federal government, the agency's formal charge was not to involve the federal government in administration of relief, and pre-existing emergency arrangements were often honored. Many private agencies remained in the business of relief. In 71 cities in 32 states, 175 private agencies were dispensing public funds through 1933. However, the RFC did stimulate the organization of new relief organizations at the state level, and these in turn helped organize relief agencies in localities, particularly rural areas, that would circumvent the older overseer of the poor or county court distribution of relief. The Family Welfare Association of America, committed to professional standards in social work, and "with the recent growth in the Association's thinking" about the potential of public agencies, moved to try to work with these rapidly expanding agencies to urge them to employ trained social workers. Sending its limited field staff to meet with new state agencies, they found a mixed bag. The New York Temporary Emergency Relief Administration was already drawing on the state's deep resources of professional social workers, with many private societies lending their "high caliber" staff to TERA. Georgia, with a relatively strong social welfare establishment, also had a close

⁹⁸David Holbrook, "Federal Action on Unemployment," Mar. 18, 1933, in "A Study of Community Problems and Relationships," Folder 32, Box 4, NSWA Supp. 1; Rich, p. 119; Colcord, p. 17-23; Singleton, p. 72-73; Bremer, p. 70-73; Fred Greenbaum, *Fighting Progressive: A Biography of Edward P. Costigan* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1971, p. 122-124. On the administration of the RFC, see William Brock, *Welfare, Democracy, and the New Deal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 139-161.

relationship to the FWAA through Gay Shepperson, the head of the State Department of Welfare. An FWAA field worker had been intimately involved in setting up relief administrations in several coal counties in Pennsylvania, and the state committees consulted regularly with family agencies on "case work thinking." In Louisiana, the state Unemployment Relief Commission was headed by "people long associated with us," reported field secretary Francis McLean. Other states were not so promising. In Florida, the commissioner of public welfare said she'd welcome help but there was little private agency presence in the state. The FWAA in Ohio had a good relationship with the state department of welfare, but was having trouble connecting with the Emergency Relief Commission. In Michigan, economist William Haber, who sat on the state Unemployment Relief Commission, was anxious to affiliate with the FWAA but the Commission had thus far shied away from social workers. The tendency in such places to have "a dollar a year man as head of the office and a disaster relief man in charge of activities" worried the FWAA that businessmen, not social workers, would shape the direction of federal relief.⁹⁹

Federal relief did drive the relative decline of private resources in meeting the crisis of the Depression, and turned voluntary fund raisers toward trying to save the social work infrastructure of their communities. Private fundraising had raised more and

⁹⁹ Blanche Coll, *Safety Net: Welfare and Social Security, 1929-1979* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 21; Singleton, p. 103-107; Brown, 179-180; Helen Tyson to Swift, Feb. 12, 1932, Folder 29, Box 10; "State Agencies Ready for Affiliation," Dec. 1932, "Field Worker Recommends Affiliation Somewhat Later," Dec. 1932, Folder 1, Box 17; Francis McLean to Field Service Staff, Feb. 1933, Folder 1, Box 11, FSAA; Stanley P. Davies, "Working Toward One Standard, Public and Private," *Social Service Review*, (Sept, 1932): 439-440. The FWAA, at the request of Hoover's Emergency Committee for Employment, had drawn up a guidebook for state public welfare administration, Rose Porter, *The Organization and Administration of Public Relief Agencies* (New York: FWAA, 1931); see Leslie Lehninger, "The Development of Social Work as a Profession," (Ph.D. diss., University of California Berkeley, 1982), p. 127-129.

devoted more money to relief in 1932 than it had ever before, but it accounted for less than 20 percent of relief expenditures that year. With the encouragement of the President's Organization on Unemployment Relief (the successor to the Emergency Committee for Employment), the renamed Mobilization for Human Needs, chaired by Newton Baker, Woodrow Wilson's former Secretary of War, set out for a major campaign for 1933's needs. But early returns that fall indicated that the contributions would not only fall under the goals set for the drive, but they would be far less than the amount raised the year before. Even if the campaigns succeeded, admitted Baker in private to social work leaders, they still faced a serious problem with "inevitable pressing need through winter." Leaders of non-relief voluntary agencies feared that their agencies would be "raided" for relief money. "The only 'out' as far as relief is concerned," Linton Swift told his staff, "is adequate public appropriations." Even chest leaders such as C. M. Bookman of Cincinnati realized that the fund drives needed to emphasize the need for public funds to take care of relief, if the structure of community services was to be preserved. As for providing relief, the leaders of the chest organization had learned "through hard bitter experience that you can't make a cover-all contract with the community as wide as that," as chests had in trying to provide relief in the 1920s.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Brown, p. 132; Holbrook to Braucher, Sept. 23, 1932, Folder 31, Box 4; Holbrook to Braucher, Nov. 7, 1932; Holbrook, "Notes on Conference with Newton Baker," Nov. 10, 1932; Holbrook, "ACCC Local Chest Executives," Dec. 3, 1932, Folder 90, Box 12; all NSWA Supp. 1; Swift to Staff, Nov. 14, 1932, Folder Membership Pre-1946, Box 17, FSAA; Monthly Meeting, NSWC, Dec. 2, 1932, Box 8, Folder 77, NSWA.

Public Funds to Public Agencies

Roosevelt's election, and the worst winter of the Depression, from 1932 to 1933, set the stage for the re-definition of the federal government's involvement in relief. Though Roosevelt himself had not been a champion of federal relief, by early 1933, with reports of starvation and nearly every state drawing on RFC funds, Roosevelt made direct relief an immediate priority. Harry Hopkins, who had been running Roosevelt's TERA in New York, traveled to Washington soon after Roosevelt's inauguration with William Hodson of the Welfare Council of New York to propose a plan for direct and work relief to Frances Perkins. Perkins, impressed with the knowledge of the social work administrators, recommended their plan to Roosevelt, and the two men plus Linton Swift of the FWAA and Walter West of the AASW began intensive consultation with Congressional leaders on passing the relief bill. Roosevelt then tapped Hopkins to lead the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, created on May 13, 1933.¹⁰¹

Like many people moving in national social welfare circles in the early 1930s, most of Hopkins' professional life had been in voluntary agencies. His career in social work started at a New York settlement house, and then to the city's Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, one of its leading voluntary family welfare agencies. Hopkins also worked for the Red Cross's Home Service Department during World War One as a field secretary in the southeast, helping organize social assistance for servicemen's families, and then into health work through the New York Tuberculosis Association in the 1920s. As with Josephine Brown, who would become his assistant at

¹⁰¹ Holbrook, "Notes on Meeting of AASW Committee on Federal Action on Unemployment, Mar. 18, 1933, Folder 32, Box 4, NSWA Supp. 1; "Linton Swift," *The Family* (May 1946): 117; June Hopkins, *Harry Hopkins: Sudden Hero, Brash Reformer* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 161.

FERA, Hopkins' work in private agencies had convinced him as much of their limitations as with their potential. At the same time, during a stint as the director of New York's mother's pension office from 1915 to 1917, Hopkins had fought to create a professionalized social work organization out of reach of Tammany politicians.¹⁰²

These experiences helped form the ideological underpinning of one of the most significant elements in the administration of FERA. On June 23, 1933, Hopkins issued his first rule for FERA funds that "prohibits the turning over of Federal Emergency Relief Funds to a private agency. The unemployed must apply to a public agency for relief, and this relief must be furnished direct to an applicant by a public agent." In so doing, it promised a shake-up in dozens of cities and hundreds of agencies across the country that had been using voluntary agencies as their administrative apparatus for relief. Hopkins's position on subsidies to voluntary organizations was the culmination of efforts by advocates of public welfare administration, notably at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration and in the American Public Welfare Association, to institutionalize public welfare as a permanent, legitimate, function of government—and to discredit the pretenses of voluntarism. An article in *Social Service Review* wrote in early 1931, "there has been a lot of talk in these last weeks about the 'voluntary spirit' and the superior values of private as against public charity. But this faith in private almsgiving is not 'rugged individualism' but eighteenth century Malthusianism...." This view had been held by the handful of trained social workers working in public welfare in the 1920s. Gertrude Vaile of Colorado argued to private agency friends that "subsidy weakens public development and sense of responsibility." As emergency relief

¹⁰² Hopkins, *passim*.

appropriations to private agencies mounted in the early Depression, Arlien Johnson, a student of Sophonisba Breckenridge at Chicago, wrote a monograph that examined state policies toward subsidy. Finding an utterly varied set of policies that ranged from outright prohibition to practical substitution of private for public, she concluded that subsidy hampered the creation of high-quality public institutions, and that state supervision of subsidized institutions was generally weak. An unsigned article in the *Social Service Review*, commenting on the Red Cross's refusal of Congressional subsidy in early 1932, argued that the subsidy would have been bad precedent; "to insure responsible control, public funds must be administered by public agencies and private funds by private agencies."¹⁰³

The creation of the American Public Welfare Association in 1930 also provided a counterweight to private agency hegemony in social welfare circles. Organized from the small group of public welfare officials who met at the National Conference of Social Work in the late 1920s, it quickly established itself as a source of expertise for organizing relief administration in the early 1930s. The APWA had close ties to the University of Chicago, not only to Edith Abbott at the School of Social Service Administration but to the Public Administration Clearing House, a network of academics and reformers that was set up as a resource to provide expertise to government at all levels. The APWA's contacts at PACH included Louis Brownlow, a specialist in municipal administration, political scientist Charles Merriam, and Beardsley Ruml, the Dean of Social Sciences at

¹⁰³ Ruling cited in Brown, p. 186; "Public Relief and the American Spirit," *Social Service Review* (Mar. 1931): 112-115; Gertrude Vaile to Holbrook, Apr. 7, 1924, Box 2, Folder 9, NSWA; Sophonisba Breckenridge, "Public Welfare Organization with Reference to Child Welfare Activities," *SSR* (Sept. 1930): 404; Arlien Johnson, *Public Policy and Private Charities: A Study of Legislation in the United States and Administration in Illinois* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931); "The Red Cross and the Great Drought," *SSR* (June 1932): 297-311.

Chicago and former director of the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial. The group helped secure a grant from the LSRM for its initial work, and recruited Frank Bane, Virginia's Commissioner of Public Welfare, as its first executive director and principal field agent. Though the APWA was initially headquartered in Washington, it moved back to Chicago to place its offices in the same building as the PACH.

The Chicago group was firmly committed to establishing professional public welfare organizations and to moving away from the predominance of voluntary institutions. Brownlow, as a city manager in Petersburg, Virginia in the early 1920s, had helped create a Community Chest in that city as an effort to promote "organized social work." His vision of voluntarism was clearly of the "demonstration" school. As a member of the executive committee of the local Red Cross chapter in Petersburg, he had helped promote public health nursing and venereal disease testing, both of which were eventually funded by the city. Ruml, in a speech to the Chicago Council of Social Agencies (made up largely of voluntary agencies) had also argued that voluntary agencies had a special function due to their "enthusiasm and flexibility," but that in general, they should not be subsidized by public funds. As Bane later said of the anti-subsidy position, "to use such funds as happened to be available and scatter them to every Tom, Dick and Harry, would be to make it impossible to develop an effective, over-all coordinated program. That was just good political science philosophy to begin with." The primary role of the APWA would be to lay the groundwork for central public administration, starting with drafting of statutes to create state relief organizations. In the summer of 1931, the handful of field representatives of the APWA, the FWAA, and the Association of Community Chests were bumping into each other across the country. Bane himself

was on friendly terms with the leaders of the national voluntary organizations, but others in the organization were not. Sophonisba Breckinridge, for instance, sharply disagreed with Brownlow's suggestion that the FWAA be promoted as the standard-setter for public social work technique; she favored pushing for a federal department.¹⁰⁴

With the creation of FERA and Hopkins' appointment as director, the Chicago-APWA group moved to push for an anti-subsidy regulation. Hopkins himself leaned toward such a position. During his tenure at the AICP in New York in the 1910s, he had watched a brutal political battle over the issue of subsidizing sectarian child care institutions, which had convinced him of the wisdom of building strong public institutions. Nonetheless, he was also cautious about handing over control of relief to "politicians." Hopkins, who had worked with Bane in the early 1920s as a Red Cross field agent in the southeast, brought the APWA director to Washington as a consultant, and Bane urged the anti-subsidy position on him. Hopkins was reluctant to offend his colleagues in the voluntary field, but he agreed with Bane and announced the policy to the National Conference of Social Work in Detroit in June 1933, and the official edict—that the structure and personnel administering federal relief at the local level had

¹⁰⁴ Narayan Viswanathan, "The Role of the American Public Welfare Association in the Formation and Development of Public Welfare Policies in the United States, 1930-1960," (DSW, Columbia University, 1961), p. 62-72; Louis Brownlow to Josephus Daniels, May 10, 1921, Associated Charities Folder, Box 4; Brownlow to I. Malinde Havey, Dec. 20, 1922, Red Cross Folder, Box 12, Correspondence of Louis Brownlow Collection, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia; "Special Conference," May 25, 1931, Membership--Public Depts Folder, Box 17; Swift to Josephine Brown, Sept. 28, 1931, Folder 29, Box 10, both FSAA; Beardsley Ruml, "Pulling Together for Social Service," *Social Service Review* (Mar. 1930): 2-8; Frank Bane Oral History (Lieby), p. 14-155, 187; Mark Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate Over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918-1941* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 101-105.

Bane was on good terms with charity leaders in Virginia as well, but saw them, like Brownlow, as demonstration agents. There were three cities in the state that had Associated Charities in the 1920s, and in Bane's eyes they lacked the staff and resources to serve a broad public purpose. Bane and Brownlow knew each other from Virginia, and when Brownlow had moved to Knoxville, he hired Bane to join him as the director of public welfare. Bane hired two professional social workers to replace the overseer of the poor in the city. See Frank Bane Oral History (Lieby), p. 13-18, 58-77.

to be public—several weeks later. The doctrine, as Bane recalled, became the “principle and slogan” of FERA. It was an “epoch-making,” said Josephine Brown, and cleared out the “confused and rationalistic thinking” that had characterized discussions about public-private relationships.¹⁰⁵

It did not, however, clear out private agencies from relief granting. Hopkins’ order gave states and cities five weeks to create public welfare structures to receive FERA funds. In a quick survey of 75 FWAA agencies immediately after the ruling, Linton Swift found that 29 would not be directly or immediately affected; these were mostly in the Northeast, where many private agencies already co-existed with public agencies, though some, such as Cleveland, had set up entirely separate departments that could be easily transferred to the public. Another 37 were facing serious difficulty, due to the fact that they had been nearly entirely subsidized by public funds and had made no provision for being taken over by the public—or they had entirely subsumed their previous casework program into relief granting. A few had simply had their executive appointed a public official, who became the agent for distributing funds.¹⁰⁶

Baltimore was one of those cities where the transition was rough. The city had created an Emergency Relief Committee and an Emergency Work Bureau in March 1932, when Mayor Thomas Jackson was forced to take over funding relief from the private agencies. In essence, however, the Committee left the agencies to handle the work as they had been before, though the Work Bureau started to pay families directly who were on work relief (though the private agencies still investigated their need). This

¹⁰⁵ Hopkins, ch. 5; Frank Bane Oral History, Social Security Project, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1965, p. 10-11, 39-40; Bane Oral History (Lieby), p. 130-131; Coll, p. 21-22; Brown, p. 185-186.

¹⁰⁶ Linton Swift to Member Agencies, July 1933, Folder 32, Box 32, FSAA.

arrangement held through 1933. The Family Welfare Association was handling 77 percent of the direct relief; Catholic Charities, 18 percent, Salvation Army, three percent; and the Jewish Social Service Bureau, two percent. When word of Hopkins' ruling came down, the city and the FWA scrambled to buy time to figure out what to do. The president of the agency was appointed "treasurer" of an "Emergency Relief Fund—Baltimore," and the agency staff all made "assistant treasurers," giving the agency a quasi-public status and the city time to organize its response during August. On September 1, the agency transferred 17,483 families, 215 staff members (mostly newly hired workers, but including 25 of the agency's most experienced workers), its emergency offices and equipment, and its work relief centers, to the Baltimore Emergency Relief Commission. Anna Ward, the executive secretary of the FWA, followed to become the bureau's director of social work, under J. Warren Belcher, a railroad executive who had run the Emergency Work Bureau. The FWA retained about 800 cases that seemed to merit the individual attention of caseworkers, including cases that needed relief but had "hopeful" prognoses—and the BERC gave it \$70,000 to use for relief for the year. At the end of the year, the FWA was literally displaced by the public agency; the BERC needed the central office space occupied by the private agency, and the city offered the FWA an alternative site. A similar pattern held with the Jewish Social Service Bureau. As a later history of the agency put it, the Jewish agency took responsibility for "intensive service" while the public agency took the "hopeless cases."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷Anna Ward, "A Century of Family Social Work;" Board of Directors, FWAB, June 23, 1933; July 25, 1933; Oct. 31, 1933, Dec. 19, 1933, all Box 27, FCSB; "A Century of Understanding, 1856-1956," Jewish Family and Children's Bureau of Baltimore [1956], Folder 1995.70.1-9, Archives, Jewish Museum of

In Delaware, the FERA ruling did not cause as much immediate havoc. The Temporary Emergency Relief Commission, established in late 1932, finally provided the matching funds for the state's share of money from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. In Wilmington, the TERC absorbed the operations of the Mayor's Employment and Relief Committee, and Walter Dent Smith, the former president of the City Council, continued to oversee the relief work. Though the Family Society still administered relief with emergency funds it had shifted about half its cases to work relief projects run by the TERC, and Ethelda Mullen, the Executive Secretary of the Society, was made the Executive Secretary of the TERC as well. Mullen attempted to push the Commission to affiliate with the FWAA, in order to push it toward better social work standards, but the bulk of the Commission's work was designing work relief projects out of an office donated by the Du Pont-owned Delaware Trust Company. The state and local TERC was eligible for funds under TERA, but disputes in the state legislature, dominated by Democrats from Delaware's two rural counties, kept state matching funds tied up; though FERA reluctantly kept supplying the state, these more limited funds increased the TERC's scrutiny of its expenses. One result was that the public body cut out its direct relief and gave work relief only to "employables"; the others were thrown back on the Family Society in the fall of 1933. The Society reported expenditures of \$45,374 in relief that year, in addition to commodities donated by the Red Cross, and ran a deficit of \$10,000. While the FERA ruling prevented federal funds from helping the Family

Baltimore. Other voluntary organizations contributed personnel to public administration as well. Harry Greenstein, head of the Associated Jewish Charities of Baltimore (the Jewish community's voluntary fundraising group), had left a year before to become the director of the Maryland Unemployment Relief Committee. Louis Kaplan and Theodore Schuchat, *Justice Not Charity: A Biography of Harry Greenstein* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1967), p. 30.

Society in the fall of 1933, it had not removed the agency from providing relief. In fact, the Family Society stepped in that winter to administer the county's public old age relief program.¹⁰⁸

Other local reactions to the FERA ruling varied wildly. As the FWAA's field secretary remarked in the fall of 1933, there was "no jigsaw puzzle in existence which can compare to the varying mixed forms of public and private combinations" dealing with unemployment relief. In many places, the wholesale transfer of personnel, records, and physical plant from private to public created an instantaneous administrative capacity for a professionalized public welfare system. In Cleveland, held up as a positive example by Josephine Brown, the Associated Charities had worked to segregate its unemployment work from the remainder of the agency, and in 1933 Cuyahoga County officials asked the agency to transfer the staff and facilities of its unemployment division to become the County Relief Administration. Ten of the agency's most experienced supervisors, 602 workers from the district offices, plus several hundred clerical workers, created an instant public administration. In St. Paul, the United Charities and the Board of Public Welfare, (already sharing the UC's district offices) agreed to merge temporarily, to use the Board's public authority to receive funds but to use the UC's infrastructure to conduct relief. The UC virtually disappeared into public welfare work, though it maintained one caseworker at each district office with a limited caseload to work on "intensive" problems. This pattern drew the disapproval of some on the national social work scene, who feared the precedent of a complete absorption of the private by the public. Perhaps the most

¹⁰⁸ Plimmer, 37-45, 67; according to Plimmer, despite FERA's problems with state's political establishment, it approved of the administration of relief in Wilmington; Board of Directors, FSW, Sept. 25, 1933, Oct. 24, 1933, Dec. 19, 1933;

discernable trend in areas where private agencies existed was the “well qualified and known executives of the private agency being drafted into the public employment set-up,” usually not as the titular head of the public department, but often in charge of the day-to-day relief practices. In Pennsylvania, one study found a “large transfer of workers from private to public agencies” across the state in the 18 months following the FERA order, about 150 total. Another survey in 1935 found that family agencies in numerous mid-sized cities such as Tuckahoe, New York, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Bridgeport, Connecticut had effected similar transfers on a smaller scale. In other cities such as Wheeling, West Virginia, Norfolk, Virginia, Scranton, Pennsylvania, and Springfield, Illinois, board members and agency executives helped plan and supervise the newly created public agencies.¹⁰⁹ In Chicago, an exceptional but notable case, the Catholic Church was able to muster its political clout to secure a ruling that allowed it to distribute FERA funds—though FERA required that the church agencies put “visible evidence” of their connection to the county is all of its offices, and on the checks that clients received.¹¹⁰

The influence of private agencies on the emerging public relief system should not be overstated. As Josephine Brown pointed out, there were several thousand counties,

¹⁰⁹ Francis McLean, “Observations in Trends Based on Field Reports,” [Fall 1933], Folder 11, Box 10; “Notes on Services of Private Family Societies to Public Relief Organizations,” Nov. 29, 1935, Folder 3, Box 32, FSAA; Waite, 278-282; Haidet, p. 31-33; A. A. Heckman Oral History, p. 20-21, SWHA. Josephine Brown singled out the following large cities as the places where private agency administration had been transferred to the public: Baltimore, Kansas City, Birmingham, Memphis, Toledo, St. Louis, Houston, Des Moines, Omaha, Little Rock, and Portland, Oregon. Brown, p. 186-187. In Birmingham, the local Red Cross agency that had close ties to the FWAA had created a department similar to the Associated Charities of Cleveland, and transferred it in a similar manner. See Edward S. LaMonte, *Politics and Welfare in Birmingham, 1900-1975* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1995), p. 122.

¹¹⁰ Gene Jones, “The Chicago Catholic Charities, the Great Depression, and Public Monies,” *Illinois Historical Journal* (Spring 1990): 13-30.

mostly rural, that had no private agency presence, and creating local units fell to the state relief boards. With only 4,000 to 5,000 professionally trained social workers in the country, and the need to create a nearly equal amount of local administrative units for public relief, the ability of the private sector to seed public welfare with professionals was decidedly limited. In many areas, relief authorities tried to hire professionals as their supervisory personnel in state and county operations. There was a strong tendency for non-social work personnel, particularly businessmen, to be put in positions of ultimate authority. Ohio in particular drew on young businessmen for county administrators. Most of the rank and file social workers in public positions tended to be young college graduates with little or no previous training save some emergency courses run by FERA and state welfare departments. In areas where private agencies were present and interested in trying to raise public administration standards, they faced resistance from this emerging corps of young public sector social workers. One FWAA staffer received sharp comments about her "temerity about myself, a private agency person ... attempting to articulate in re personnel qualifications in public agencies." This group of new workers would also form the basis for what came to be known as the "Rank and File" movement within social work, that pushed for unionization of social service personnel, higher standards for relief clients, and that challenged the casework focus of professionals trained in private agencies.¹¹¹

Within FERA, public-sector advocates crowded out those from the private sector.

With a grant from the Carnegie Corporation in 1933, the APWA added field staff and

¹¹¹ Brown, 277-282; Coll, p. 23-24; Fred Thomas to Ruth Hill, Apr. 28, 1934; Odessa Gibson to Mary Brisley, Aug. 7, 1934, both Folder 26, Box 18, FSAA. On the Rank and File movement, see Jacob Fisher, *The Response of Social Work to the Depression* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980); Ehrenreich, p. 110-121; Walkowitz, p. 121-135.

began working with state governments, particularly in areas with little public welfare experience, to create state-level relief organizations. In 1933, at the same time that Bane had arrived to advise Hopkins, the FERA chief had also recruited C. M. Bookman of the Cincinnati Community Chest to advise him, and to serve as a counterweight to Bane's expansive view of public welfare. By 1934, however, Bookman had left. Aubrey Williams, a recruit to FERA from a private agency in Milwaukee, had become Hopkins' closest advisor. The FERA experience had converted Williams into a strong advocate for public administration. Bane recalled an incident during the wrangling over the Chicago Catholic Charities subsidy, where Williams was initially sympathetic to the position of the charity. Bane told him that the agency's motto was "public funds should be administered by public agencies," and that if he didn't agree, he should leave. Williams backed off, and over time became an even more strident advocate of Bane's position than Bane himself. Other private personnel noticed the growing gulf between their national leadership and the Washington establishment. Joanna Colcord of the Russell Sage Foundation lost touch with Hopkins after 1934. Swift marveled at how quickly the FERA had built such a "complicated machine" in Washington but sensed that the FWAA's influence was better felt at the local level.¹¹²

New Alignments

The advent of FERA and the ruling on subsidies prompted Linton Swift to try to codify his position on the relationship between public and private agencies in the

¹¹² Bane Oral History (Columbia), p. 10-11; Bane Oral History (Lieby), p. 130-131; Holbrook, "Conference with Allen T. Burns," Jan. 19, 1934, Folder 91, Box 12; Holbrook, "Memorandum for Mr. Braucher," Sept. 20, 1935, Folder 43, Box 5, both NSWA Supp. 1; "Some Notes on Meeting of National Social Work Council," Jan. 5, 1934, Folder 82, Box 8, NSWA.

emerging welfare state. In an extended essay published in 1934, *New Alignments Between Public and Private Agencies in a Community Family Welfare and Relief Program*, Swift addressed social workers with a proposed division of labor between voluntary organizations and new government relief agencies. In many ways, the perspective of *New Alignments* was that of a chastened private sector that realized “the obvious inadequacy of any private voluntary effort” in meeting the needs of a mass of unemployed people. It spoke also, though, of worries within the voluntary establishment that public intervention would prove to be ephemeral, and that communities might once again turn back to the voluntary sector to carry the burden of financial assistance.

Swift revisited and rehearsed the arguments for and against the use of private agencies as a stand-in for public institutions. On the one hand, he said, subsidizing private agencies was expedient and quick; it could save crumbling private agencies; it preserved the social work infrastructure of those organizations; it was freer of laws and customs that constrained public organizations; there was less likelihood of political interference; and it could circumvent the recalcitrance of conservative public officials to create new public authority. In some cases, said Swift, private agencies sought public subsidy because they were afraid they could not support themselves without having relief-giving as one of their functions. On the other hand, the potential harms in subsidy included violating the principle that public authorities should administer tax dollars; the likelihood of greater instability, as it would be easier to cut grants off to a private agency; that the “demonstration” argument for subsidy rarely produces more than demonstrating that a private agency cannot do the work of a public agency; and the stunting of the development of pre-existing agencies, such as county welfare boards; it made the private

agency the scapegoat for criticism; it dried up sources of private support for the agency; and it tended to wreck pre-existing programs and made it harder to interpret new programs.¹¹³ From the perspective of long-term public administration, and from the viewpoint of private agencies intent on carving out a distinctive function, subsidy was ill-advised.

New Alignments argued for public agencies to take the burden of widespread public needs, while private agencies experimented with techniques that were new and needed demonstration in order to build public support. This rationalization of what might be called “progressive” voluntarism viewed voluntarism and government as ultimately collaborative and not competitive. With voluntary agencies as the laboratory for the welfare state, citizen initiative could be preserved while at the same time public institutions could meet the basic needs of those caught in the vicissitudes of a modern industrial society.

Swift realized that this set of ideas did not necessarily reflect the situation on the ground in 1934. He took his readers through the example of the city of “Manton,” where an antiquated pre-Depression public welfare agency had been forced to modernize and take wider responsibility as private resources diminished. It hired caseworkers from the local Associated Charities, but it found itself under the crushing pressure of high caseloads and “insistent demands for economy” from local taxpayers and public officials. On the other hand, the private family society in Manton had putatively given the job of relief to the private agency, and changed its name from “charity organization” to “family

¹¹³ Linton Swift, *New Alignments Between Public and Private Agencies in a Community Family Welfare and Relief Program* (New York: Family Welfare Association of America, 1934), p. 1-6.

welfare,” but in reality it found itself without a meaningful change in the actual function of the agency.¹¹⁴

Swift believed the solution was to use intensive casework as the dividing line, for the moment, between public and private—following the thinking of leading social workers in the 1920s. While most professional social workers advocated the use of casework in public agencies, the Depression seemed to indicate that public relief work would, for the foreseeable future, involve high caseloads and pressing problems of determining eligibility for relief. There were many people in Manton, argued Swift, who simply needed financial assistance and were capable of supporting themselves if given a chance. Public welfare should exist to meet the needs of those people. On the other hand, he thought that there were people who needed less help with money than they did with problems “due to personality and relationship difficulties,” who might be the most likely candidates for help from voluntary family agencies. Public agencies should aspire to such work, but Swift did not believe that the public was at a point where it would accept the more “subjective” aspects of professional casework—i.e., the autonomy social workers would need in order to meet the needs of their clients.¹¹⁵

New Alignments envisioned a future for private agencies free from the burden of providing material relief. While Swift realized that private agencies would need to help some clients with money and resources, and that there existed a “shadowy area in which the line of responsibility between the public and the private agency is not clear,” the

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 39.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 17-55. Swift did allow that public agencies might be able to experiment “semi-secretly” with intensive casework, but predicted that it would be vulnerable in times of crisis. As chapter four will show, in a post-war controversy over public casework in Baltimore and New York, Swift’s words were prescient. Ibid, p. 25.

public agency should be the default provider of monetary assistance. His agencies would move on to explore “the contribution of psychiatry, psycho-analysis, and the whole field of mental hygiene,” to see what contributions it could make to their work with individuals and families.¹¹⁶

Swift’s text was a landmark document for the leadership of voluntary agencies. It released them from the albatross of a previous generation of charity leaders’ opposition to public relief. It embraced public welfare as legitimate, and yet claimed the high ground of professional social work practice for voluntary agencies. By moving toward “service” rather than relief, family agencies would embrace a more modest, specialized, and professional form of voluntarism suited to co-existence with an emerging public welfare bureaucracy. But *New Alignments* was a document for more prosperous times. Written as FERA was cutting back on its work-relief programs under the Civilian Works Administration, it was clear that federal relief was not a stable element of the social welfare landscape, and voluntary agencies were far from escaping demands for monetary assistance. Moreover, even though Swift’s writings represented the consensus of a cosmopolitan social work elite, and many of the social workers trained at the better schools, there were many member agencies of the FWAA that did not, or could not embrace his vision of the ideal mode of service for family agencies. For them, the remainder of the 1930s was not a time of demonstrating new techniques, but playing a reduced, supplementary role to a welfare system racked with conflict, abrupt shifts in policies, and gaping holes in coverage.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 39-41.

No Relief From Relief

Roosevelt's State of the Union address on January 4, 1935, declared that the federal government should "quit this business of relief." In announcing his proposal for a broad public works program to replace the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Roosevelt argued that states, localities, and charities had to bear their share of the burden, particularly for those who could not work. "Such people, in the days before the great depression," said Roosevelt, "were cared for by local effort - by States, by counties, by towns, by cities, by churches, and by private welfare agencies. It is my thought that in the future they must be cared for as they were before." Roosevelt was not proposing that the federal government abandon social welfare. That year he would help create the Works Progress Administration, to fund work relief, and the Social Security Act that would eventually form the core of the U.S. welfare state. He did, however, seek to push states and localities away from depending on the federal government for relief, as FERA was currently financing the vast majority of relief expenditures. But with the WPA limited in reach and in the amount it paid, with Social Security's social insurance and unemployment insurance years from implementation, and with the public assistance titles limited to the elderly, blind, and single mothers, the gaps left for the states to fill remained wide. Relief would remain a preoccupation of local politics throughout the decade, and voluntary agencies would feel keenly the gaps in the public provision.¹¹⁷

The travails of the family agencies in Baltimore and Wilmington can serve as a brief demonstration of how difficult it was to embrace the idea of *New Alignments*. In

¹¹⁷ "State of the Union Address," Jan. 4, 1935, in Richard Polenberg, ed. *The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945* (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 2000), p. 51; Edward Williams, *Federal Aid for Relief* (1939; New York, AMS Press, 1968), p. 86.

these agencies, it was not because social workers or their leadership lacked the aspiration to do so. In Baltimore, after the transfer of cases from the Family Welfare Association to the Baltimore Emergency Relief Committee, the agency had hoped to focus its efforts on “intensive” casework. However, Francis McLean of the FWAA predicted “an extremely trying time ahead” for the agency. The agency was still accepting many families for relief, and while the distinction between “service” and relief was an ideal, as one worker recalled, “the situation in Baltimore did not lend itself to so clear a division of work.” The BERC, though it had absorbed the social work staff of many of the private agencies, was being run by administrators drawn from the legal and business elite of the city. They believed that the private agency social workers had been too liberal with their clients, and began cutting back sharply on FERA rolls in 1934. Anna Ward, the FWA supervisor who had helped run the BERC, returned to the private agency and instructed her workers to keep track of cases that the BERC was refusing to help or was helping inadequately. One worker complained to Ward that the BERC policies “change so frequently that whatever information we give today will be out of date tomorrow.” The state’s relationship with FERA, in the meantime, was unstable and threatened the division of labor in Baltimore. State leaders were consistently unable to muster the political will to meet the state’s share of its FERA contributions, and the relief system lived under the constant threat of cutbacks from Washington.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ McLean, “Observations on Trends Based on Field Reports,” [Fall 1933]; Sperrow Manuscript, p. 67, Box 1, FCSB. FERA officials, on the other hand, thought the system of district offices inherited from the private agencies fostered a neighborhood and ethnic particularism in the distribution of relief, and urged a more centralized system. See Argersinger, p. 32-33; Anna Ward to District Secretaries, May 13, 1935; Northern District to Ward, May 15, 1935, 12:29, FSCB.

But the major crisis was when Roosevelt and Hopkins announced in 1935 that the federal government would terminate its support for direct relief and invest federal money in a new work relief program, the Works Progress Administration. States and localities would be forced to take responsibility for those who could not be employed on the WPA. The transfer wrecked havoc in Baltimore. The WPA could not absorb all the families taken care of by the BERC, and while the program was praised for its substitution of work for direct relief, it paid only a "security wage" that did not adjust for family size. The city estimated that about 4000 families would need \$50,000 to compensate for the end of the BERC and the shortcomings of the WPA in the first few months of 1935. The city refused to appropriate more funds, saying it was a federal responsibility, and the private agencies did not have enough money to meet the need. When the BERC shut its doors at the end of 1935, 25 families were reputed to have starved in the aftermath. The FWA received 59 emergency calls in three days, and notwithstanding its avowed turn to service, could not turn away the families. That spring, despite an emergency infusion of city money that re-opened the BERC, the FWA went into a \$27,200 deficit by May of 1936 dealing with the needs of those left out or shortchanged by the end of federal direct relief.¹¹⁹ The city was forced by public protests and abject destitution to institute an Emergency Charities Association to take responsibility for those ineligible for the WPA. But the ECA's rules were so stringent, and WPA grants remained so strict, that the FWA continued a substantial relief budget well into 1939. In that year, the agency's general secretary admitted, "we cannot say that we have reached any state that is final or even wholly satisfactory." The head of the

¹¹⁹ Board of Managers, FWAB, Sept. 20, 1935 to May 15, 1936, FCSB; Argersinger, 42-45.

newly created Department of Welfare, Thomas Waxter, told the FWA he doubted that, given the problems surrounding relief, the FWA would be able to get support for a “service only” program.¹²⁰

Wilmington’s Family Society underwent similar throes, driven by the intransigence of the state legislature over funding statewide unemployment relief. Like many large cities, including Baltimore, Wilmington faced a state legislature dominated by rural representatives who were often at odds with urban politicians and were deeply anti-urban in outlook. On the issue of relief in particular, rural legislators viewed it as largely an urban problem, and one that went to support increasing numbers of African Americans in the city. The representatives of two rural counties of Delaware, represented by Democrats, feuded continually with the state’s Republican Governor, Clayton Buck and Wilmington’s legislative delegation, over the issue of relief. FERA had had the same problem in Delaware as it had in Maryland: the state refused to appropriate matching funds for the Federal contribution. It was more galling in Delaware, as the small state had one of the highest per-capita incomes in the country. As debate stalled in the legislature, Hopkins refused to help anymore; “I am disposed to let them stew in their own juice.” The Wilmington Temporary Emergency Relief Commission ran out of money in late April, and distributed foodstuffs for another week before shutting down entirely. Seasonable weather had decreased the relief rolls somewhat, but 13 percent of the entire state’s population was still eligible for relief, and relief was suspended for ten days before another rudimentary public program was started. In the meantime, the needy had been surviving on donations from bakeries and dairies, and several cases of starvation had

¹²⁰ Board of Managers, FWAB, Sept. 17, 1937, 6:27; Nov. 9, 1938, 7:27; “Report of the General Secretary, 1938;” Board of Managers, FWAB, May 10, 1939, 8:27 FCSB; Argersinger, 48-56.

been reported. The Family Society protested several times to the legislature over its failure to appropriate funds. Half of the Family Society's cases still came to them for relief, including "lots of by-products" that were not taken care of by the relief agencies. In early 1935, the Family Society was still caring for the old age cases referred by New Castle County, but had been paying their relief bill out of the its own pocket since June of 1934. "Relief expenditures must be the responsibility of the public agency," urged the Family Society's director Ethelda Mullen once again—who at that time was overseeing the underfinanced relief work of the public agency as well.¹²¹

Relief was utterly fragmented and sporadic in Wilmington for the next several years. The county created a small program for those unable to work, the "Unemployable Special Relief Unit," run through the county's Old Age Welfare Commission. Direct relief through the county's Temporary Emergency Relief Commission continued sporadically until 1937, when it shut down for good, leaving the county with no general relief for several weeks until the Special Relief Unit took it over, though the funding continued to be at the whim of county officials. The Family Society gave relief to some of those left in the lurch. The WPA and a private work relief project funded by the Du Ponts also aided some of the unemployed. The state had passed an unemployment

¹²¹ Board of Directors, FSW, Mar. 20, 1934 to Jan. 15, 1935. The administrative mechanics of relief in Wilmington in 1934 and 1935 were convoluted. Governor Buck, frustrated with the legislature, proposed an unusual solution to allow Wilmington to access federal funds. He revived the old charter of the Associated Charities (which had been abandoned when the Family Society changed its name in 1931), which had a clause allowing the Levy Court (the property tax authority of New Castle County) to appropriate relief funds to it. Buck named it Relief Commission, Inc., and after protracted negotiations with FERA, got the federal agency to relax its policy on not appropriating directly to counties and towns, whereupon the county produced the necessary matching funds, and Relief Commission, Inc., with Ethelda Mullen of the Family Society in charge of relief, took over the work of the TERC and resumed relief in Wilmington. The Levy Court eventually decided the plan was not legal, and in the meantime, the legislature had approved a new body, the Temporary Emergency Relief Commission of New Castle County, which took over from RCI. Plimmer, ch. 5-7; Hopkins quote is in Plimmer. p. 82.

compensation law conforming to the Social Security Act of 1935, but it would not take effect until 1939. Ethelda Mullen had resigned from her post on the TERC-NCC in 1935 to return to the Family Society. There, she worried that with the government backing out of direct relief, that the Society would again be called on to meet relief needs. She urged her board to help build pressure for a good local welfare department that would allow the Society to develop its “social case work program.” Noting that their caseload included 63 divorced or separated couples, and 40 deserted women, she wondered how many of those break-ups the Society could have prevented if it had had the time? Wilmington’s economy fared better than Baltimore’s in the late 1930s, and the relief loads across all the agencies eased somewhat, with the Society’s relief caseload dropping to less than half of its total cases in 1939—though it still consumed over half the budget of the agency. Mullen noted a shift toward shorter-term help, and an increase in cases that requested the Society’s help in “relations” with one of the public relief agencies.¹²²

The cases of Baltimore and Wilmington illustrate how completely voluntary family agencies had embraced the need for public intervention in relief—even in these cities so dedicated to voluntarism. The reactions of the national organizations of voluntary agencies to shifts in federal relief policies, particularly the end of FERA, also show that they now depended on the public sector to provide the basic safety net. As FERA’s termination grew nearer at the end of 1935, Swift told social work executives that they had to make it clear that the voluntary agencies “cannot take over enough of the load that the Federal Government is letting go.” A delegation from the Community Chests and Councils of America met with Roosevelt in December 1935 to urge a gradual

¹²² Board of Directors, FSW, Oct. 29, 1935.

rather than abrupt phase-out of FERA, and were “crestfallen” at Roosevelt’s refusal.

Private agencies braced themselves for a flood of relief requests; the Austin, Texas FWAA affiliate reported being flooded by applicants who had not been able to obtain WPA certification.¹²³

Relief continued to be a major preoccupation and expense for many private family agencies in the late 1930s. A major study conducted in 1934 and 1935 found that most of their intake remained married couples and fatherless families in economic difficulty; 75 percent of the requests were either for relief or for help with service from other organizations. A survey of agencies in smaller towns found that they were still looked to as the “main channel” in meeting relief needs in 1938. A comparison of eight cities with a population between 150,000 and 200,000 showed most private agencies devoting significant institutional resources to relief.

¹²³ “Questions Being Asked Today in the National Social Work Organizations,” Oct. 15, 1935, Folder 33, Box 4; Holbrook, “Lunch with Burns and Buell,” Dec. 16, 1935; Holbrook to George Fisher, Dec. 18, 1935, both Folder 91, Box 12, all NSWA Supp. 1; Margaret Wead to Swift, Feb. 4, 1936, Folder 33, Box 32, FSAA.

Percent of Funds Allotted for Relief	1936	1937
Bridgeport, Conn. (Family Society)	54.1	38.4
New Haven, Conn. (Family Society)	49.6	54.2
Wilmington, De. (Family Society)	69.5	65
Worcester, Ma. (Associated Charities)	59.9	56.5
Clayton, Mo. (St. Louis County Welfare Society)	57	57.3
Orange, NJ (Bureau of Family Service)	13.6	22.8
Harrisburg, Pa. (Associated Aid Society)	54.2	58.2
Scranton, Pa. (Family Society)	51.6	49.4

(Source: Yearly Report Summaries Folder, 1937, Box 21, FSAA)

A survey of major cities found the same pattern:

Percent of Funds Allotted for Relief	1935	1936	1937
Chicago (Family Service Bureau, United Charities)	64.9	62.5	64.5
Boston (Family Welfare Society)	61.9	61.7	61.1
St. Louis (Provident Association)	76.4	61.9	53
Newark (Social Service Bureau)	31.3	22.9	22.5
Cleveland (Associated Charities)	60.9	60.9	61
Philadelphia (Family Society)	54	48.2	51.9
Pittsburgh (Family Service of Allegheny County)	21.8	28.1	26.4

(Source: Yearly Report Summaries 1937 Folder, Box 21, FSAA)

Overall, though, FWAA agencies noted a drop in total expenditures on relief from 1935 to 1936; the yearly reports of FWAA agencies indicated a total of \$7 million given in 1936, as opposed to \$9 million in 1935, a 22 percent decline. Jewish family agencies also noted a smaller decline of nine percent. The numbers were not indicative of declining needs, however. The Family Society of Wilmington was turning away cases eligible for public relief in this period; and a report from the Social Service Bureau of Newark from the same period estimated that they could have used half again as much money for relief.¹²⁴

The lines of administrative authority in relief had been cleared up somewhat by the FERA rulings. An FWAA survey in 1936 found that of 211 private agencies in its membership, 60 were still using public funds, and in 38, a majority of the funding was private. In some of these cities, though, the distinction between public and private was hazy or nonexistent well through the 1930s. In Louisville, Kentucky, the Family Service Organization administered tax funds through 1939 until it was able to transfer all the work to public authorities, “releasing the FSO toward its true goal—fostering and maintaining useful, responsible family life.” In Savannah, Georgia, the Family Society had partially merged with the city and county welfare departments, but found it difficult to separate out its own work and withdrew in 1937. Lexington, Kentucky, Bloomington, Indiana, Akron, Ohio, and Iowa City all reported mixed public-private administration in 1936 and 1937.¹²⁵

¹²⁴Witmer, p. 209; FWAA Staff Information Service, Mar. 28, 1938, July 11, 1938, Folder 11, Box 20; “Report on Evaluation Committee re: Social Service Bureau’s Relief Problems,” June 1, 1937, Folder 29, Box 32; FSAA, “Report on Answers to Summary...,” Dec. 3, 1938, Folder 3, Box 32, FSAA.

¹²⁵ “Private Member Agencies Administering Public Funds,” May 25, 1936, Folder 3, Box 26; McLean, “Quarterly Summary of Field Contacts of FWAA, Oct.-Dec. 1926;” “Quarterly Summary of High Spots in

With most family agencies having drawn away from direct use of public funds, though, the question turned to the responsibility of voluntary agencies to push for stronger government relief provision. A meeting of the largest private family agencies in 1934 passed a resolution supporting a “permanent national, state and local public welfare program,” and the Board of Directors of the FWAA passed a resolution in 1935 urging its member agencies to take an active role in improving public relief programs. The Board noted that there had been “a certain settling back” by private agencies when the government moved in, but, in 1936 as the FERA withdrawal threw public relief into turmoil, “the time seems to have come to stimulate action along those lines.” The institutional fate of private agencies was still closely intertwined with their public counterparts. As one social worker complained, “it now seems that it is not so much a question of sharing responsibility as it is how are we going to help them maintain their service. How then can we maintain our own agencies if we are going to do that?” But putting the full weight of family agencies behind a comprehensive welfare state would prove to be a challenge. What might seem clear to board members and staff of the national FWAA was not always so on the local level. While many agencies would have agreed on the observation in 1939 that local welfare programs were in disarray and perhaps close to disintegration, not many would answer the FWAA Board’s call to support a Congressional initiative for federally funded general assistance. Conservative board members and large contributors, pointed out David Holbrook of the National Conference of Social Welfare, were far more divided on the issue of “the fundamental

Field Contacts, Apr.-June 1937,” Folder 10, Box 11, FSAA; Stanley Blostein and Mary Ann Millet, “A Study of the Community Councils, Family Service Organization, Louisville, Kentucky,” (MSW, University of Louisville, 1958), p. 92; Family Service of Savannah, *Forty Years of Service, 1909-1949* (Savannah, Ga., 1949), p. 22-24.

right to subsistence” than most social workers in private agencies. Of 120 agencies surveyed in 1935, 37 reported that they were “lending all possible support” to raise relief standards. At the other extreme, such agencies as the FWAA affiliate in San Antonio, Texas, had the “wishful hope of somehow, someday, kicking public agencies out entirely.”¹²⁶

Conclusion

An undercurrent of anxiety ran through voluntary agencies throughout the 1930s. It was not simply due to the overwhelming needs pressing against them, but a genuine question of function. Linton Swift was not the only one musing on “New Alignments” in family agencies. In a conference on “Family Life and National Recovery” in New York City in late 1934, Mary Gibbons, a Catholic agency social worker who had headed the city’s Home Relief Bureau briefly, told her fellow social workers that private agencies could look to serving unmarried mothers, helping work with families on the verge of putting a child in an institution, giving relief to those ineligible for public assistance, or helping people with “serious spiritual and personality problems.”¹²⁷ *Social Work Today*, the journal of the radical Rank and File Movement, had a more cynical, though poetic, take on the conference:

¹²⁶ “Report on Big Cities Meeting,” Apr. 26, 1934, Folder 7, Box 4; “Summary of Agency Self-Evaluations,” Feb. 1935, Folder 13, Box 20; Board of Directors, FWAA, Oct. 19-20, 1935, Nov. 20-21, 1936, Folder 3, Box 32; Swift to Member Agencies, June 12, 1939, Folder 22, Box 6, FSAA; Holbrook to Ellen Potter, Jan. 6, 1936, Box 5, NSWC Supp. 1; “Questions Being Asked Today...,” McLean, “Quarterly Summary,” Apr.-June 1937,

¹²⁷ Mary Gibbons, address at Conference on Family Life and National Recovery,” Nov. 20, 1934, Folder 12, Box 7, FSAA

In the faded ivory and gold ballroom of the Astor
 Four hundred Social Workers
 Board Members
 Interested Individuals
 Gather to assay the place of the family agency today,
 what it is doing, where it is going, are we wanted
 hurry up find out, we're sunk, our job's gone, but you
 wait and see, we've got
 Service.¹²⁸

One tangible sign of the identity crisis of family agencies can be observed as they changed their names. Since the 1920s, family agencies had been backing away from the word "charity" to try to emphasize their ideal function. The severe strain of relief giving in the late 1920s and early 1930s accelerated this process, as in the change from the Associated Charities to the Family Society in Wilmington in 1931. Community Chests, which had embraced relief in the 1920s, faced a similar problem. Leaders suggested in 1933 that their campaigns focus on "welfare" rather than "relief." This was "welfare" in an earlier, broader sense than its contemporary meaning, and to Chests meant in particular the "character-building" efforts of voluntary organizations such as the YWCA and the Boy Scouts, which had suffered as private fundraising was drained toward relief. Many within family agencies embraced this broad meaning of the word. By 1936, 100 of the 232 members of the Family Welfare Association of American had followed the lead of the national body and added "Welfare" to their name; by that point, only 18 members had "Charity" in their titles. But even as this shift was occurring, another one was underway. The rapid expansion of public assistance agencies, first under FERA, and then as a result of the Social Security Act, put another legion of "Welfare" agencies in the field. This rapid association, and stigmatization, of "welfare" with "relief" in the 1930s is

¹²⁸ Phyllis Lowell, "The F.W.A.A. Considers Family Life and Recovery," *Social Work Today* (Jan. 1935): 23.

observable as family agencies backed away from the former term; between 1934 and 1936, only five FWAA agencies added “welfare” to their names, while 14 added “service.” The Columbia, South Carolina and Lynchburg Virginia agencies had both switched from “Associated Charities” to “Family Welfare Society” in that period; but St. Paul, Minnesota had switched from United Charities to Family Service, the Associated Charities of Mt. Vernon, New York had changed to the Family Service Association, the Orange, New Jersey Bureau of Associated Charities had become the Bureau of Family Service, while the Chester, Pennsylvania Relief and Family Welfare Society had become simply the Family Society.¹²⁹

This rhetorical commitment to “New Alignments” was often at odds with the reality in many agencies. As an FWAA administrator recalled, “we wanted the community to think we were different, and in many quarters we were guilty of interpreting services that in practice we were not ready to perform.”¹³⁰ It is unsurprising that many family agencies proclaimed an expertise ahead of their capacities, considering the decline of voluntary giving during the 1930s—community chest fundraising did not regain its 1928 level until 1940.¹³¹ Examples of such precocity could be found across the country. While the transition was discernable at the more rarified professional level, many family agencies, particularly outside of the East Coast, lacked the training to do so. The Rockford, Illinois FWAA affiliate was wryly placed in a category of “Getting Ahead of Itself” by Francis McLean of the field staff for its “boldly proclaimed consultation

¹²⁹ Board of Directors, Association of Community Chests and Councils, Mar. 24, 1933, quoted in Arthur Katz, “A Study of Conflict and Cooperation in the Relationship Between Organized Labor and Voluntary Social Welfare,” (PhD, Columbia University, 1968), p. 207; FWAA Dept. of Studies and Information, “Names of Member Agencies,” (New York: FWAA, Feb. 1937).

¹³⁰ Frank Hertel, “Case Work Services Offered by Private Agencies,” *The Family* (June 1942): 130.

¹³¹ Cutlip, p. 213.

services for anybody with a family problem,” though its workers were not “fully equipped” to do such work. McLean warned of “case work indigestion”: on the one hand, workers who were anxious to grasp onto new insights from psychiatry but who used the concepts in a superficial way; on the other hand, many older social workers who showed a “real defensiveness” about their lack of knowledge of those insights from “newer trends in social work.” However, the national board of the FWAA worried about examples of “family counseling agencies” that were appearing in some cities that seemed to duplicate what their own member agencies aspired to do. Despite the fact that such agencies were usually run by nonprofessionals, the FWAA was concerned that they might try to seek out Community Chest membership, and perhaps challenge FWAA members for funding. The FWAA had to do a better job at “interpretation of social work, interpretation that will reach the average citizen, in language he can understand.”¹³²

Mostly, though, family agencies caught their breath a bit. It was clear that the massive efforts to give relief in the early 1930s, and the toll from supplementation thereafter had damaged the voluntary sector. Francis McLean, while concerned about the state of public welfare in the late 1930s, also turned his attention to the family agencies that were struggling to recover. A new executive at the Milburn, New Jersey agency was “appalled to find nothing but a relief-giving agency,” and was working to upgrade its staff; in Saginaw, Michigan, a “progressive group” helped their “old relief giving agency” hire a professional worker; and in Aurora, Illinois, “a new start on the ashes of

¹³² McLean, “Quarterly Summary of High Spots in Field Contacts,” Apr.-June, 1937; Minutes, Executive Committee, FWAA, Nov. 11, 1938, Folder 22, Box 6. Relying on official agency histories often overstates the ease of transition from “relief” to “service” in the 1930s; see Cohen on the United Charities of Chicago, p. 269, and compare to the FWAA statistic that 65 percent of the agency’s expenditures were still going to relief in 1937.

an agency which died a few years back when the staff member went to public.” The St. Paul United Charities, having merged with the Board of Public Welfare, reactivated its old charter and reconstituted itself in 1935 as a smaller agency titled “Family Service of St. Paul” that offered social service, and claimed several thousand applications or referrals. A number of other agencies had gradually increased the percentage of cases where the only service granted was “help with emotional problems.”¹³³ In the fog of the Depression, a chastened voluntarism saw the glimmer of a brighter, professional future.

¹³³ McLean, Quarterly Summary, Jan.-Mar. 1938, Apr.-June 1939, Oct.-Dec. 1939, all Folder 10, Box 11; FWAA Staff Information Service, Mar. 28, 1938, Folder 11, Box 20, FSAA; Witmer, p. 209.

CHAPTER TWO: IF YOUR FAMILY IS OKAY, YOU'LL BE A BETTER FIGHTER

Introduction

A reminiscence of the Cleveland Family Welfare Association recalled that the charitable agency endured the typical deprivations of the World War Two home front: “Office equipment was falling to pieces and irreplaceable stockings were being snagged on rough edges; floor coverings were disgraceful; lighting was poor; fumes were escaping from gas stoves!” Cleveland had to be scoured for lamps and rugs to furnish the caseworkers’ offices. Moreover, caseworkers themselves were in short supply. The agency lost half of its professional staff during the war, and nearly all its male workers—the agency was “de-manned,” exclaimed the historian. Voluntary agencies across the country struggled to keep their meager infrastructure functioning—the Family Welfare Association of America extracted a classification for “preferred mileage” to give social workers in its member agencies an allotment for gasoline to make their home visits.¹³⁴

Material and personnel shortages, though, covered up a deeper unease in established voluntary agencies on how they would meet the needs of wartime. Early signs from defense centers such as the Hampton Roads area of Virginia helped shape the expectations of the social problems associated with the war, particularly for private and public casework activists at the national level. The cluster of military facilities, including Langley Field and the Naval Air Station in Norfolk, and the U.S. Navy Yard at

¹³⁴ Florence T. Waite, *A Warm Friend for the Spirit: A History of the Family Service Association of Cleveland and its Forebears, 1830-1952* (Cleveland: Family Service Association of Cleveland, 1960), p. 341, 346, 365; Linton Swift, “War Years in Family Social Work, 1938-1945,” *Highlights* (March, 1945): 5.

Portsmouth, as well as the ship building facilities at Newport News, increased their employees from 17,476 in 1939 to 27,471 in 1940. Both the Family Welfare Association of America and federal public welfare officials zeroed in on Hampton Roads to divine what problems were to come for the country as a whole. The FWAA featured a report from Sue Slaughter, the director of the Family Welfare Association of Norfolk in the November, 1940 issue of *Highlights*. Slaughter focused on the lack of housing, increasing rents, and the problems they might pose for the agency and its clients. But, she admitted, “just how exactly the change in Norfolk will affect the Family Welfare Association is still speculative.”¹³⁵ An impatient anticipation crackled through the national leadership of both private and public welfare agencies as they waited for the massive social dislocations they were convinced would accompany the war.

Nearly all observers of social welfare agreed that the war would seriously affect the program of private agencies and to the pattern of public-private interaction in social welfare. But nobody could pinpoint precisely what was going to change. War would bring social disruption, they assumed, but a different sort of disruption than that of the Depression that had overwhelmed private agencies. The relocation and expansion of defense industries, registration of aliens, handling refugees, replacing conscripted workers, working with selective service, and services to enlisted men were among the most commonly cited problems private agencies assumed they would face during wartime. However, FWAA Executive Director Linton Swift warned that agencies should

¹³⁵ Sue Slaughter, “Effects of National Defense Preparations,” *Highlights* (November, 1940): 99-101. Hampton Roads endured as a popular portal into defense problems; as one writer observed in 1942, “The newspapers and magazines of the nation had discovered [Norfolk] as a horrible example of wartime crowding, and it seemed as if every journal in the country was carrying an article about Norfolk.” Marvin W. Schlegel, *Conscripted City: Norfolk in World War II* (Norfolk: Norfolk War History Commission, 1951): 186.

relate such opportunities “to the maintenance of the core and quality of the case work program,” and not “merely capitalizing these developments as promotional opportunities or ‘climbing on the band wagon.’”¹³⁶

The sharp decline in unemployment that accompanied World War Two would prove as direct a challenge to private social agencies as had the overwhelming need of the Great Depression. While the Depression had forced private charity organizations to acknowledge the limit of their ability to address poverty, the decline of need fueled by the wartime economy questioned the need for charity itself. Too many people had knocked on the doors of private agencies in the 1930s, but too few people sought aid in the early 1940s. The fundamental alteration of the relationship of the public and private sectors in social welfare effected in the thirties, combined with a return to prosperity in the forties, threatened to render obsolete private action in meeting the basic needs of the poor. Critical voices outside of charity, and leaders within organizations such as the Family Welfare Association of America, all drew attention to the fact that many charitable agencies would wither away if they did not adjust to new circumstances.

World War Two convinced some in voluntary agencies that social change would bring new needs that their agencies could effectively address. Such a strategy proved remarkably successful, and the variety of efforts to re-invent what “giving” meant in a booming economy demonstrates the entrepreneurialism of the voluntary sector. As many subsequent scholars of the history of social services have noted, though, “service” was a broadly, and often ill-defined area of activity. As this chapter will demonstrate, family agencies engaged in a wide variety of activity plausibly defined as “service”, most often

¹³⁶ Swift, “Preparing for the Future,” *Highlights* (October, 1940): 94-95.

in opposition to “relief.” What made the war experience distinctive, though, was an increasing hierarchy of services in family agencies that placed the counseling aspects of social casework at the forefront of their activity, and subsumed “tangible” aid as adjuncts to a therapeutic, casework relationship. Voluntary social work offered solutions to pressing material problems, such as finding housing, locating job training, legal assistance, or negotiating with public authorities as tools to solving emotional problems that had rendered the clients in need of aid in the first place.

This mix of emotional and material service had been commonplace in the aspirations of voluntary social workers since at least the 1920s, but the wide scale entry of public institutions into the welfare field altered that mix for the voluntary sector. Prior to, and even during the Depression, financial assistance had forced clients into their agencies. It was, however, the odd prosperity fueled by the war, and not simply the challenge of the Depression, that revealed to many charities that financial relief could no longer be their central mission.

By focusing on the entrepreneurial strategies of this set of voluntary organizations, this chapter will also question the functionalism that underlies many of the explanations of charity’s transformation. Popular, promotional literature that surrounded such agencies portrayed change as a seamless evolution from alms-givers to counselors—as a set of social needs are revealed, institutions rise or change to meet them. As a publication of Family Service of Savannah, Georgia (fresh from a name change from the Savannah Family Welfare Society) claimed in 1949, “The basic purpose of the Savannah Family Welfare Society had always been the same — to strengthen and rebuild

family life.”¹³⁷ Unsurprisingly, such sweeping statements papered over the crisis of mission of voluntary agencies in this era, and have been more or less taken as historical fact. Agencies, in fact, had to actively address the question of whether there remained needs for them to serve. Moving “service” to the foreground, with an emphasis on emotional problems, built on trends in the social work profession.

The choices for private family agencies were deeply influenced by the increasing cultural legitimacy of “therapy.” World War Two was a critical turning point for the expansion of the mental health professions. Psychiatric and psychological personnel were employed in large numbers in the armed services, and their experiences with the stresses “normal” soldiers faced in extreme circumstances helped shift the profession’s focus from “abnormal” cases to a broader range of problems. Psychological references seeped into the popular press as its practitioners moved out of elite offices or asylums into the mainstream.¹³⁸ As case workers searched for ways to nurture the connection between their professional training and institutional location in the post-Depression era, the boom in mental health professions suggested a strategy. Private agencies experimented with offering their services in a range of new settings, particularly in connection with the Selective Service system, federally funded day care centers, and expanding war industries. But it was in the field of marriage and family “counseling,” offered as a service for a fee, that private agencies began to sense some interest on the part of a

¹³⁷ Family Service of Savannah, Inc. “40 Years of Service, 1909-1949,” (Savannah: 1949): 25.

¹³⁸ Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 82-123; John C. Burnham, “The Influence of Psychoanalysis Upon American Culture,” in Jacques M. Quen and Eric T. Carlson, eds., *American Psychoanalysis: Origins and Development* (New York: Brunner-Mazel, 1978): 52-77; James Capshaw, *Psychologists on the March: Science, Practice, and Professional Identity in America, 1929-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 128-142.

broader public. By the end of the war, private agencies were scrambling to take part in what appeared to be a surging demand for help with family problems, and translated older practices of “giving” into part of an emerging culture of therapy.

Family Service in Wartime Wilmington

In late 1942, Cora Rowzee, a field agent from the Family Welfare Association of America, the national association of voluntary family service agencies, visited the Family Society of Wilmington at 602 North Street in Wilmington, Delaware. Like in all field visits by the FWAA, Rowzee was to take stock of the quality of the case work being done at the Society, to see how well the board of directors and the professional staff worked together, and how the Society interacted with other social agencies in the community. She talked with the Executive Director Ethelda Mullen, a veteran social worker trained by social work pioneer Mary Richmond; with Else Jockel, a recent MSW from the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social work, hired to upgrade the social work skills of the Society’s staff; she examined case records; and sat in on a board meeting. Rowzee’s main concern was carrying out the FWAA’s standard-setting role for the voluntary agencies.¹³⁹

But Rowzee was also visiting in the first months of the Second World War. Wilmington, like many other industrial communities, was undergoing a modest boom as war production boosted the fortunes of the chemical and manufacturing enterprises that formed its economic base. Wilmington’s men were being drafted and sent off to the front.

¹³⁹ Cora Rowzee, “Report of FWAA Contact,” Nov. 16-17, 1942, Folder “Wilmington, DE, 1940-45”, Box 44, Family Service Association of America Records, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota.

The city was shaking off the malaise of the Depression with the help of the bountiful employment offered by the wartime economy.¹⁴⁰ As employment picked up, and the financial crisis eased for many families in Wilmington, the Society noticed a drop-off in applications. Rowzee reported that the decline “is causing some concern but is not too alarming. A different type of case is coming in with fewer requests for relief.”¹⁴¹

Most of the applicants who sat down at the Society for their initial interview with the intake worker were still seeking what many had done before—some sort of tangible aid or service from the Society. As in the past, the most important thing that people needed was money. But the nature of the Society’s work as a relief-granting institution was changing. Even before the onset of the war, in early 1940, the directors noticed that the amount of relief they had granted in December 1939, \$2,155.65, was half as much than December 1938. Mullen, the executive director, credited it to the increased availability of public welfare through New Deal sponsored programs, and the work of the Society with more cases of short term need, often cases that fell through the cracks of New Castle County’s Mother’s Pension Bureau (which handled Aid to Dependent Children) or the Unemployable Special Relief Unit. In fact, they noted that in 1939, they had given financial assistance to only 11 families in every month of that year; down from 90 in 1934. The implication for the Society, the board thought, was that they should “endeavor to develop its function as a service agency, using relief as part of the treatment.”¹⁴² In essence, they proposed to bring the Society’s function as a place for

¹⁴⁰ Carol Hoffecker, *Corporate Capital: Wilmington in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), p. 115-116.

¹⁴¹ Rowzee, “Report of FWAA Contact.”

¹⁴² Board of Directors Minutes, Family Society of Wilmington (FSW), Jan. 1, 1940; Apr. 15, 1941; Oct. 28, 1941, Children and Families First Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

“treatment” to the fore, and allow financial provision and other services to play a supporting role. Relief and tangible service could give their clients a sense of security “and so release a specific anxiety, enabling the individual to work with his other problems.”¹⁴³

In Wilmington, going to the Family Society was a more or less voluntary experience. Unlike some private agencies that combined child welfare work with family social work, the Society was rarely entangled in issues involving the police power of the state. In 1942, almost half of the clients walked into the Society on their own initiative. About a third were sent from other social agencies – the public welfare department, the Red Cross, the Veterans Administration, and so on. And the remainder had been referred by individuals—doctors, lawyers, teachers, or private citizens. The small staff of social workers in the Society prided themselves on the voluntary nature of their relationships to clients, and saw it as vital that the people they worked with committed themselves to working with the Society, and were not being forced to do so. Even when clients were referred by other agencies, the Society usually insisted that they make their own appointments, so as to emphasize their commitment to seeking help.¹⁴⁴

The war did shape the nature of the requests people made of the Society. The Society’s social workers noticed a number of cases directly linked to the war: migrants to Wilmington seeking aid in finding living space in an increasingly tight Wilmington housing market, or money to pay a first month’s rent until they received a paycheck; women heading families who needed money to tide them over until their husband’s serviceman’s allotment began, or women seeking help in finding a day care facility to

¹⁴³Executive Director’s Report, FSW, October 28, 1941.

¹⁴⁴E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 27, 1942; Rowzee, “Report of FWAA Contact.”

watch their children while they went to work. Most people who sought help did so on behalf of a family – usually an “unbroken” family with both parents in the house, but with a substantial minority of single-parent homes, usually female-headed.¹⁴⁵ The racial composition of clients shifted somewhat during the war; African American applicants increased initially as the war started, most likely due to the end of New Deal relief programs, but then dropped off as war employment in Wilmington’s industries opened to blacks.¹⁴⁶

It was the “non-relief” services during the war that increasingly occupied the attention of the Society’s caseworkers. In particular, their social work training kept them alert to signs of “personal problems” that might be tangled with, or the cause of, the more concrete problem that brought them to the Society in the first place. Prosperity had eased financial problems, said Mullen to the Board, but the community was seeing “increasing problems of desertion, divorce and juvenile delinquency, and family life is already showing signs of undermining.” The Society did not preserve their case records, but during the war, other caseworkers from private family agencies gave examples of emotional problems revealed by the particular complications of a society at war. The Kennedy family had been referred to a private family agency by the Army Emergency Relief organization; Mr. Kennedy, drafted into the service, had written requesting aid for his wife, who seemed suicidal. “Sitting with her head in her arms in the crowded waiting room,” of the agency, she “seemed bewildered” by the situation. In the interview with the

¹⁴⁵ E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 28, 1941. In 1941, of 554 families who applied for help, 323 were from two-parent homes, 65 were widows, 8 were widowers, 101 from homes “broken” by desertion, separation, or divorce, 9 unmarried mothers, 25 single men, 21 single women, and two orphans.

¹⁴⁶ Directors, FSW, Dec. 19, 1945. By 1945, the racial breakdown of the agency’s caseload was 79 percent white, 21 percent black. African Americans made up roughly 12.2 percent of Wilmington’s population that year. ED Report, FSW, Oct. 16, 1945.

caseworker, Mrs. Kennedy described an idyllic marriage of a year and a half, recently marred by the loss of their first child and the drafting of her husband. Mrs. Kennedy found a job, but was often absent due to illness and feelings of discouragement. She felt cooped up in the small apartment that she could barely afford. Mrs. Kennedy returned to the agency to talk with the caseworker on several subsequent occasions, during which she revealed that in fact, her husband had been unfaithful to her while she was pregnant. That confession, it seemed to the caseworker, was a turning point; “it was after she had poured out these painful experiences that Mrs. Kennedy was able to consider her present situation realistically.” She was able to go to the doctor and return to work, and begin planning for alternative housing. What became of the marriage was not revealed.¹⁴⁷

At the Society, Mullen reported to her board, less than a quarter of all cases in 1942 reported personal problems upon application, but that upon the development of a relationship with a caseworker, in over three-quarters of all the cases the caseworker discerned some sort of emotional problem connected with the reason for application.¹⁴⁸ Did new sorts of emotional problems beset people? In fact, Mullen explained to her board of directors, people were still approaching the agency with similar sorts of issues as they had in years past, “but the case workers of today with newer skills sense underlying problems which the individual must be helped to clarify if our service is to be useful.” To this end, the Society had hired Else Jockel in 1938 to help sort out the intake of the

¹⁴⁷ E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 19, 1943; Florence Hollis, “The Impact of War on Marriage,” *Proceedings of the National Conference on Social Work, 1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943); 104-115. Hollis taught social work at both Columbia University and Smith College (where she had a small clinical practice as well), and edited *The Family/Journal of Social Casework*, the leading professional journal for family social work, published by the national association of private family agencies, the Family Welfare Association of America.

¹⁴⁸ E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 27, 1942.

agency and help identify possible cases where deeper insight might be useful to the client. Jockel's training at the University of Pennsylvania's social work school, a center of psychoanalytic social work, helped her to bring the Society's social workers up to speed on current trends in therapeutically tinged social casework.¹⁴⁹

It is not clear how Mullen's description of the values of the "newer skills" of the caseworkers resonated with her board. But she had their trust, and they delegated to her the task of setting policy on day to day activities—too much delegation, thought Rowzee the FWAA field agent, who worried that the board did not fully understand the agency's mission. But their satisfaction with Mullen's work also derived from the fact that the agency still had one foot squarely in the older tradition of charity. The Family Society had changed its name from the Associated Charities of Wilmington in 1930, but carried "formerly Associated Charities" on its letterhead until 1940.¹⁵⁰ Not only were many of the "services" the agency dispensed fairly tangible, in the way of money or use of community resources, but the agency continued to practice high profile "charitable" activity. It supplied the list of families for the local newspaper's "Twenty-Five Neediest" campaign at Christmas, and helped purchase and supply gifts for the children of those families.¹⁵¹ It sponsored a summer camp for about one hundred white children each year, though the agency's caseload was still racially mixed. And, as Jockel explained to Rowzee, wealthy members of the Wilmington community still used the agency to

¹⁴⁹ E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 28, 1941; Else Jockel, "Helping a Family Agency in the Process of Becoming Responsible for Functional Clarity," unpublished seminar paper, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, 1950, in CFF Library; B. Ethelda Mullen Speech [1950], in Folder 3, Box 15, Bill Frank Collection, Delaware Historical Society.

¹⁵⁰ The Family Society, "The First Fifty Years: Records and Reminiscences of the Personalities and Activities to Which Wilmington Owes Its Progress in Family Relief Work," (Wilmington, DE: 1934); Directors, FSW, Apr. 16, 1940.

¹⁵¹ "History of the Fund for the 25 Neediest," *Journal Every Evening* [Wilmington], Jan. 1, 1953, p. 8.

investigate and help people who had asked them for aid, or who they knew to be in need. This ran against the agency's hope that people would come to them voluntarily, but Jockel "laughingly told of ways in which insistence upon the client's application has had to be changed because of community pressure."¹⁵²

The declining caseload of the agency, and the nebulously defined decision to orient the agency toward "service", made the Society cautiously attentive to possibilities opened up by the extension of the wartime state into Wilmington and the upsurge in wartime employment. The Selective Service system seemed to offer some possibilities. Spurred on by suggestions from the FWAA *Blue Bulletins* that tracked the impact of defense mobilization on family welfare, the Society undertook investigation of 10 cases of requests for dependency deferments from the local Selective Service Board. However, the Society's board concluded that such work was not within the scope of a private agency and instead urged the Selective Service board to hire a trained social worker. However, Executive Director Mullen was thereafter given "unlimited authority in connection with the Defense Program." She volunteered her services in coordinating a screening program for the Selective Service in the state, creating mechanisms to gather social histories of applicants from any social agency in the state, in an effort to sift out potential cases of psychological or medical infirmities—and was awarded a citation from the Selective Service after the war.¹⁵³ The Society reached out to other potential sources of clients, writing to local industries that their services were available for their

¹⁵² Rowzee, "Report of FWAA Contact."

¹⁵³ FSD Directors, February 8, 1941; June 17, 1941; January 20, 1942; February 15, 1944; *Journal Every Evening*, Sept. 23, 1946, p. 1.

employees, and, after some jostling, establishing a referral service with the local Red Cross for family problems of servicemen.

Day care also preoccupied the agency. Desperately short of facilities, like most American communities in the early 1940s, Wilmington's working mothers were often referred first to the Society, who served as a gatekeeper to the sparse child-care resources. In keeping with the social work wisdom and the gender norms of the 1930s, the Society looked askance on mothers going to work and worried about its effect on children. Ethelda Mullen of the Wilmington agency reported to her board that, "We believe that not every woman should be encouraged to enter industry; that a careful selective screening should be undertaken in order that children may be protected from lack of adequate care in their own homes." She worried that "Many [women] will not be willing to return to the job of homemaking and the children of today and tomorrow will lose their right to the protection of home and family life."¹⁵⁴ Rather than act as neutral broker of community services, Mullen and her social workers attempted to explore with mothers the consequences of daycare, presuming that disrupting traditional mother's roles would wreak emotional damage on their children.

Wilmington's experience points to some of the common elements across the experience of voluntary family agencies during World War Two. Declining caseloads tied to the decreased need for financial relief was characteristic of wartime charity. The degree of crisis it suggested varied from agency to agency, depending on the press of related work, particularly their engagement with the expansion of wartime public

¹⁵⁴ E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 19, 1943.

authorities. By the end of the war, though, it was clear that charity was well on its way to a fundamental redefinition of its function in a welfare state.

Where Have All the Clients Gone?

The erosion of applications to the Wilmington agency in the first year of the war proved to be a national trend. The information gathered annually by Ralph Hurlin of the Russell Sage Foundation on case work agencies indicated that their intake, rather than increasing with new needs uncovered by the war, actually started slipping once the war began. Hurlin's report for 1942 caused the greatest consternation: after a full year of the war effort, the aggregate number of cases in the 60 FWAA member agencies he surveyed had declined by 16 percent; the number of people applying for monetary relief dropped even more quickly, down 31 percent in January 1943 than a year earlier. Much of this could be attributed to the elimination of the Depression's entrenched unemployment. Unemployment dropped sharply: from 14.6 percent in 1940, to 9.9 percent in 1941, 4.7 percent in 1942, and 1.9 percent in 1943.¹⁵⁵ This was good news for the unemployed, but bad news for family agencies. An executive of the Boston Family Welfare Society was disturbed by the perception that since "men were now back at work there would be little for us to do."¹⁵⁶ As Hurlin observed, "the stress and strain of the war has not generally resulted in an increased demand for the services of the family casework agencies." While economic good times accounted for the decline in relief cases, Hurlin continued, "this does not account for the failure of the great variety of problems that are not primarily

¹⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* Part 1. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 126.

¹⁵⁶ David W. Haynes, "Is Work a Problem?" *Highlights* (June, 1942): 49.

economic to maintain the volume of both applications for service and total cases served.”¹⁵⁷

What accounted for this gap? It was clear to family agencies that the war was expanding the range of needs and that they had the tools to help. Clarence Pretzer of the Family Welfare Association of Providence wrote, “The trend is not in line with the well known fact that war dislocations have created many new problems for families and individuals which these agencies could help them solve.” The FWAA called a conference in June 1943, following the release of Hurlin’s report to discuss possible explanations. Among those tendered was the decrease of 11 percent in professional personnel, greater time required with fewer cases due to complex wartime problems, staff time being devoted to other agencies, and the expansion of counseling services in other agencies such as the Red Cross and the Veteran’s Administration. Hurlin’s figures ultimately revealed, though, the continuing deep identity between voluntary agencies and financial assistance. The agencies that had done the best job of “public interpretation” of their services beyond financial assistance had had the best luck in retaining their staff and increasing the volume of their services.¹⁵⁸ Pretzer noted that the lack of increase in non-relief cases meant that “the program of education on how and when to use a family agency needs further development.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷Ralph G. Hurlin, *Operation Statistics of Selected Family Casework Agencies: 1942* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, Dept. of Statistics, June 1943): 4-10. The Department of Statistics conducted an annual survey of the statistics of private family agencies, a product of the close historical relationship between the Russell Sage Foundation and private social work that included subsidized office space in the Foundation’s two buildings in Manhattan for a variety of national social work organizations, including the FWAA, the Child Welfare League of America, and the American Association of Social Workers. David C. Hammack and Staunton Wheeler, *Social Science in the Making: Essays on the Russell Sage Foundation, 1907-1972* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994), p. 85.

¹⁵⁸Swift, “War Years in Family Social Work,” p. 8.

¹⁵⁹Clarence Pretzer, “Family Case Work Statistics,” *Highlights* (February, 1945): 152-154.

The problem was not simply one of public relations. It was rooted in the fact that, even during the ascendance of welfare, voluntary agencies had not ceased providing monetary aid; they simply became a distinctly secondary resource during the 1930s. It was clear that public aid dwarfed private: in 116 cities regularly surveyed by the Social Security Board, private relief had dropped from 24 percent of total relief in 1929 to one percent in 1940.¹⁶⁰ But this was primarily due to an increase in public spending, not a concomitant decrease in voluntary expenditures. The temporary air that hung over early relief programs, and the eligibility limits of later programs, created enough uncertainty and gaps in the overall public welfare state that private agencies still had a substantial number of people seeking monetary aid. As the FWAA's historian observed, "there were many aspects of their relief function that had to be worked out, slowly and patiently, because of the still unsettled public relief situation."¹⁶¹ In 1936 relief still constituted more than half of the expenses of 197 member agencies of the FWAA.¹⁶² This percentage declined somewhat in the late 1930s. Ralph Hurlin, head of the Russell Sage Foundation's Department of Statistics, observed that in the late 1930s and in 1940, cases deemed "relief" cases were indeed declining to slightly over a third in 1940; as the experience of the Wilmington agency showed, many of these probably needed aid for shorter periods.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰Bureau of Public Assistance, *Public and Private Aid in 116 Urban Areas*, Public Assistance Report No. 3 (Washington: GPO, 1942). As Brown notes, the figures would be further diminished if rural areas were added into the figures, due to the concentration of private casework agencies in urban areas.

¹⁶¹Margaret E. Rich *A Belief in People: A History of Family Social Work* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1956), p. 141.

¹⁶²Brown, p. 414-415.

¹⁶³Ralph Hurlin, "Trends in Case Loads," *Highlights* (July, 1941), p. 65-66.

The question remained open whether private agencies had whole-heartedly exited the field of alms-giving. As Clara Rabinowitz of the Jewish Family Welfare Society of Brooklyn admitted in 1942, the rise of public assistance had had a substantial impact on private agencies but one “to which we have not entirely adjusted our own work.”¹⁶⁴ Some federal public assistance officials were surprised that private agencies were still identified with monetary assistance. Ann Geddes, chief of Statistics and Analysis at the Social Security Board’s Bureau of Public Assistance, which administered the federal welfare programs such as Aid to Dependent Children, wrote to Hurlin that she was “astonished that there has been so little decline in the volume of relief in recent years.”¹⁶⁵

Voluntary agencies found themselves as dependent on relief as they feared their clients might be. Emphasizing the economic deprivation of clients tended to be the most effective appeal to contributors. With the advent of the New Deal, such appeals became less tenable. Josephine Brown, the FWAA-fieldworker-turned-critic, argued that the “relief appeal” was the “easiest way to reach the community pocketbook” for private agencies, even if it reflected less and less the actual work of family agencies and community chest fundraising organizations.¹⁶⁶ Social work union leader Jacob Fisher echoed Brown, noting, “most contributors still give under the impression that they are feeding the hungry and clothing the naked.”¹⁶⁷ As relief became a very public responsibility, case workers now had to face the fact that “sob stories,” as Barklie Henry

¹⁶⁴ Clara Rabinowitz, “When Is Relief Giving the Role of the Private Agency?” *The Family* (February, 1942): 348-343.

¹⁶⁵ Ann Geddes to Ralph Hurlin, May 18, 1944, Folder 064.2, Box 180, Bureau of Public Assistance Correspondence, 1935-1948, RG 47, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

¹⁶⁶ Brown, p. 78.

¹⁶⁷ Jacob Fisher, “The Future of the Private Field,” *Social Work Today* (April 1939): 10.

of New York's Community Service Society put it, no longer accurately reflected their day-to-day work. As Laura Colby Barrett anguished in a *Survey Midmonthly* article in 1944, "how to bridge the horrible gap between what we do, and what the money raisers have to say we do? Somehow, helping people to help themselves has got to be made as interesting and as vital as giving out cash and tears to Widow Jones...."¹⁶⁸

Critics of voluntarism decried the continual emphasis in voluntary agencies of a charitable program they associated with paternalism and stinginess. To them, the advent of the New Deal spelled the end to this older sort of voluntarism. Josephine Brown wrote of private agencies that "it is probably that the decline of the last few years will become absolute rather than relative unless the private social work field succeeds in meeting the challenge of the new public program...." Brown disdained the conservatism of the voluntary sector and symbolized the confidence of an expanding public welfare corps that believed that the ideological power of voluntarism had finally been eroded.¹⁶⁹

More sympathetic critics within voluntary agencies wondered if public welfare spelled the end of voluntarism. Barklie Henry, the president of New York City's Community Service Society (the largest private family agency in the country), observed to the 1940 National Conference on Social Work that "Today, if private social work went out of the picture completely, it is doubtful if as a result many people would starve or go homeless."¹⁷⁰ Even prior to Hurlin's report, Linton Swift had noted the decline of applications and worried that "to the extent that this is true it indicates a community conception of the family agency's services as being primarily based on relief needs,

¹⁶⁸ Laura Colby Barrett, "Looking at Ourselves," *Survey Midmonthly* (April, 1944): 122.

¹⁶⁹ Brown, p. 411.

¹⁷⁰ Barklie Henry, "We Take a Lot on Faith," *Survey Midmonthly* (November, 1940): 319-321.

rather than upon the much wider range of problems arising in family life.”¹⁷¹ In 1942 an FWAA committee criticized agencies where there was “too little flexibility in adapting service to meet new situations of families.”¹⁷² Swift urged his agencies to modify, and possibly abandon, their orientation toward the poor. Since the public sector had in theory taken responsibility for the impoverished, private agencies would have to change “charity” into “helping” people outside of the scope of government programs. However, Swift anticipated that since the historic, charitable mission of these agencies was fixed in the minds of the community, and since many agencies (and particularly their boards) were loath to abandon this mission despite the leaking away of their clientele, the course of realignment would prove to be difficult.

However unlikely abandoning relief seemed in the early years of the war, voluntary agencies saw some advantages in the public sector’s assumption of responsibility for a financial safety net, however ragged. The financial strain of relief on voluntarism was a hard lesson taught by the Depression. By shaving off the needy who could be covered by either social insurance or the federally supported welfare categories, agencies could relieve themselves of the financial burden of these cases. Constance Fisher of the Family Service of St. Paul argued that some private agencies saw the expansion of the welfare state as an opportunity to “wash its hand of all ‘dead wood’ cases in order to do a real demonstration job in the community.”¹⁷³ An emphasis on service, with casework at its core, was cheaper, and offered social workers a chance to put their training to proper use. A Red Cross worker observed, “where money-giving is

¹⁷¹Swift, “Family Agencies and Family Life,” *Highlights* (February, 1941): 162-163; Swift, “Declining Intake—Newly Revealed Needs,” *Highlights* (April, 1941): 17-18.

¹⁷²FWAA Committee on Family Welfare Program, Minutes, February 7, 1942.

¹⁷³Constance Fisher, “Trends in Cooperative Case Work Relationships,” *Highlights* (June, 1941): 55-57.

involved, enthusiasm is slight; where there is no question of relief, but only of casework services, clients achieve a sudden popularity.”¹⁷⁴ This was not simply a matter of fascination with technique. The general inadequacy of funds available to meet financial needs (particularly in the public sector) frustrated workers and drove many to find “herself a job with an agency not primarily concerned with relief,” usually in the voluntary sector.¹⁷⁵

“Service other than relief,” one of the categories of the Wilmington agency’s annual report, assumed an increasing proportion of the time of voluntary family agencies during World War Two. The nature of that service, and who would be served, was an open question. As voluntary agencies searched for an answer, they often turned to patterns of cooperation with emerging federal authorities in a pattern of reciprocal, often mutually beneficial arrangements where voluntary agencies offered expertise in exchange for access to clients opened up by wartime agencies.

State Sifting and Client Seeking

The strategies suggested and attempted for revitalizing private case work agencies vividly illustrated the hope that “helping” agencies could take root in populations of the non-poor. Private agencies turned first to the state, then to voluntary social welfare alliances, and finally to war industries to gain entrée to potential clients. Such efforts, on one level, were a strenuous attempt to remain relevant in the face of an

¹⁷⁴Laura Colby Barrett, “Looking at Ourselves,” *Survey Midmonthly* (April, 1944): 121.

¹⁷⁵Catherine Groves Peele, “We Who Must Say ‘No,’” *Survey Midmonthly* (April, 1940): 127. Peele had been a case work supervisor in the Bencombe County Welfare Department in Asheville, North Carolina; she left to become executive secretary of the private Family Service Association in Durham, North Carolina.

expanding welfare state. On another level, they reflected an evolution and tension among voluntary agencies over the nature and target of charity, moving, as one writer later put it, “from the alleviation of distress to the ‘improvement of life,’ or from the poor to a broader swath of the population.”¹⁷⁶

Expansion strategies for family service agencies included following the inroads of expanding state authority through the Selective Service and federally sponsored day care so agencies could attract draftees, women workers, and their families; using private war-time fundraising organizations to expand the scope of their agencies in overcrowded war boom towns; and reaching out to industrial workers through both management- and union-sponsored counseling programs. All three tactics involved, to various degrees, adapting their charitable image toward a more nebulous arena of social service. Successful agencies during the war, Swift emphasized, would be the ones that “showed the highest degree of alertness ... to changing community needs.”¹⁷⁷ Most importantly, it meant selling themselves to groups on the upper margins, or beyond, of their traditional client base, in the working and middle classes—an effort that was initially nearly universally rejected during the war years.

One of the most obvious strategies for the leadership of the FWAA was to attach themselves to the extension of public authority during wartime. Such an approach turned the traditional “progressive” rationale for voluntarism on its head—instead of serving as demonstration laboratories for future public policy, private agencies instead looked to opportunities for service opened up by the expansion of the state.

¹⁷⁶ John R. Seeley, Buford H. Junker, R. Wallace Jones, et al. *Community Chest: A Case Study in Philanthropy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 37.

¹⁷⁷ Linton Swift, *Local and National Developments in the Family Welfare Field* (New York: FWAA, May 1943): 2.

The sprawling outreach by the Selective Service into millions of families provided an irresistible opportunity for the private welfare field. As Swift noted in an editorial in the FWAA *Highlights* magazine, “The procedures of our national Selective Service system are in effect a sifting of the personal, physical, and financial problems of seventeen million men.” The war justified the state reaching out into the general population, examining and classifying potential soldiers. Such sifting, private agencies hoped, would reveal legions of men in need of assistance above and beyond what the state could provide. Private welfare could not marshal the coercive action required in such a process, but agencies could piggyback onto the state and use Selective Service as a “case finding” device (in Swift’s words) to pinpoint the new populations they hoped to serve.¹⁷⁸

The emphasis early in the war on screening potential soldiers for mental illness or psychological disorder suggested some possibilities for private agencies. Psychological screening was built into the Selective Service Act of 1940, and the broad categories of psychological illness made “neuropsychiatric” cases the predominant cause of rejection. As the *Survey Midmonthly* noted, praising the FWAA initiative, in the first wave of inductions in 1940 and 1941, 18,971 men out of 100,000 had been rejected, over half because of defective teeth, eyes, ears or “mental or nervous conditions.” Ultimately, 1,846,000 men would be rejected for psychological conditions, 12 percent of all recruits and 38 percent of all rejections, the single highest cause for rejection. “What happened to

¹⁷⁸Swift, “Declining Intake—Newly Revealed Needs,” p. 17.

the men after rejection, no one knows. Probably nothing,” the *Survey Midmonthly* observed.¹⁷⁹ And therein lay an opportunity for service.

Rejected draftees could be offered both the material and clinical skills of family service agencies. The FWAA Executive Committee began corresponding with General Lewis Hershey, head of the Selective Service, in early 1941, and secured his permission for local agencies to approach local draft boards to offer their services to rejected applicants.¹⁸⁰ Private family agencies in New York City conducted some of the most prominent experiments in allying themselves with draft boards. The “Seven Family Agencies of New York,” a coalition of Catholic, Jewish, and non-sectarian family agencies, distributed pamphlets to 280 local Selective Service boards that read, “If Your Family Is Okay, You’ll Be a Better Fighter,” and made an effort to introduce local board members to the types of services private agencies could offer registrants.¹⁸¹ Herman Stein, a caseworker in the Jewish Social Service Association of New York, reported that the primary accomplishment of a referral agency set up in an induction station was to make rejected men feel worthy of recognition so as to prevent them from being demoralized.¹⁸² The Louisiana Committee for Mental Health called for just such a service, noting, “In some instances selectees rejected for psychiatric reasons were told that they were ‘crazy’ and they returned to their communities terribly upset.”¹⁸³ One

¹⁷⁹“A First Step,” *Survey Midmonthly* (May, 1941): 152; Herman, 86-89. For an extensive examination of the screening program, see Rebecca Greene, “The Role of the Psychiatrist in World War II” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1977).

¹⁸⁰FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, March 21, 1941, Folder 1, Box 7, FSAA Records.

¹⁸¹Folder “Seven/Eight Family Services Group—Pamphlets,” Box 320, Community Service Society Records, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University; “If Your Family is Okay,” *Highlights* (June, 1943): 51-52;

¹⁸²Herman Stein, “Helping Men Rejected at an Induction Station,” *The Family* (October, 1944): 228-234.

¹⁸³ Louisiana Committee for Mental Health, “The Effects of the War Upon the Family and Its Individual Members” (New Orleans, La., Sept. 1942), p.11.

psychiatric social worker from Los Angeles explained the case of Harry Meyers, rejected for service due to his fear of crowds. "Facing the reality situation of being in 4-F, of being different, is something which the patient's ego cannot accept. Before the war he managed to get by, his fiancée accepted the situation as well as she could, and [the] patient did not feel too different from others. Now, however, he is unhappy, and after reading about the clinic, came in for help."¹⁸⁴ Other states embraced such programs as well. New Jersey's Selective Service system approved attaching "social and health counselors" to local draft boards. Noting that the discovery of mental or physical problems that led to rejection "often provokes profound disturbances" that require "skilled counsel as to the proper attitude and course of action to adopt," Selective Service offered social agencies "many opportunities" for service. The New Jersey AASW helped recruit counselors for local boards.¹⁸⁵ New York City private agencies also collaborated with the Mental Hygiene Committee of the Welfare Council of New York to place psychiatric social workers with local selective service boards, to do preliminary psychiatric screenings of applicants, to study personal and family situations before the boards, and to refer rejectees to appropriate agencies.¹⁸⁶

Such programs sprouted up across the country; FWAA member agencies organized information centers in draft boards in at least 40 cities, from Hartford, Connecticut to Chattanooga, Tennessee.¹⁸⁷ The FWAA applauded such efforts, and

¹⁸⁴ Beatrice Z. Levey, "Need for Psychiatric Services During Wartime," *Papers in Honor of Everett Kimball* (Smith College School of Social Work, 1943), p. 72.

¹⁸⁵ Emil Frankel, "The Selective Service and the Public Welfare," speech to the New Jersey Tuberculosis League, April 29, 1943, Science, Industry and Business Library, New York Public Library.

¹⁸⁶ Oscar Halper, "Selective Service and the Case Worker," *The Family* (October, 1943): 221.

¹⁸⁷ FWAA Blue Bulletin No. 9 [1941]; *Highlights* (March, 1941); *Highlights* (June, 1944); Ruth Brainerd, "The Selective Service Referral Center, Washington D.C.," *Public Welfare* (Nov. 1943): 342-347; Luther Woodward, "Social Case Work in Relation to Selective Service and the Rejectee," *NCSW 1943*, p. 85-96.

pointed to the fact that such programs “will have great significance in relation the later postwar problems of demobilization which will give Member Agencies the opportunity to assist individuals in their adjustment to civilian life.”¹⁸⁸ These efforts were clearly a means to an end: promotion by local agencies to local draft boards and registrants would hopefully pay off in the postwar period by developing more widespread awareness of the capabilities of private case work agencies.

Family agencies also proffered their more traditional skills of social investigation as a service to draft boards. In communities where the Selective Service ran screening programs, social workers from private agencies often worked to prepare social histories of draftees—primarily their record of contacts with local welfare, medical, and law enforcement agencies.¹⁸⁹ This was the primary service that the Wilmington agency supplied to local draft boards, and in fact, Delaware had the most comprehensive program of all the states.¹⁹⁰ In other cities, voluntary caseworkers took on the task of investigating claims for deferment due to the need to support dependent family members. The Cleveland Associated Charities (soon to be the Family Welfare Association) supplied a caseworker to the local Selective Service in 1941 “to make wise choices about dependency deferments”; the Red Cross took over and financed the work later that year.¹⁹¹ Both private family agencies and Red Cross agencies performed this service in

¹⁸⁸ FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, November 12, 1943, Folder 2, Box 7, FSAA Records.

¹⁸⁹ Committee on Selective Service, Pittsburgh Federation of Social Agencies, “A Contribution by Health and Welfare Agencies to Psychiatric Screening of Selectees,” 1943; “Operating procedures, Ramsey County Selective Service Screening Program, Sept. 8, 1943”, both in Folder 1, Box 8, Amherst Wilder Foundation Records, Minnesota Historical Society; Allan Stone, “The Screening of Selective Service Registrants with Psychiatric Disabilities,” *NCSW 1943*, 97-103.

¹⁹⁰ Margaret Wead, “Information Memorandum: Medical Field Agent Plan,” July 24, 1944, Wartime Problems—Conscription Folder, Box 36, FSAA.

¹⁹¹ Waite, p. 334-335. The Cleveland FWA then turned to the problem of dealing with rejected draftees, running a pilot project that was eventually folded into the investigation work. Dozens of retired social

towns across the country.¹⁹² While it may have been easier to make a case to draft boards that they needed this kind of assistance—rather than service to demoralized rejectees—private agency workers had decidedly mixed feelings about the experience. While in St. Louis County, Missouri, such a program had provided a good source of referrals for the Family Service Society, case workers ultimately concluded that “this service was not the type we would incorporate into our permanent program.” It was difficult for the agency to distinguish itself from the authority of the draft board, and it made the use of casework skills awkward, since they generally were predicated on the client voluntarily entering the relationship with the caseworker.¹⁹³ The Family Service Bureau of Newtonville, Massachusetts had a more positive experience, but they admitted that “primarily this service is one of economic investigation and the usual case work relationship is not present, as the person is not seeking help.”¹⁹⁴

Public welfare agencies found such investigations much more palatable. In 1941, public welfare departments in 39 states were providing dependency investigations, and 31 states had state-level guidelines for such procedures established by the state department of public welfare and the state Selective Service Board. Public welfare case workers saw the chance in much the same light that private agencies did; a way of “relating ourselves in a very tangible and understandable way to many lay individuals whose knowledge of our skills prior to this time had been limited.” While professionally trained case workers

workers and Associated Charities case workers volunteered for Selective Service work in Cleveland during the war.

¹⁹²*Family Security Confidential Bulletin* No. 12 (October 12, 1941), CBSM Folder 1, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215; Aline Rosenbaum, *Investigations for Selective Service Boards for Claims of Deferment on Account of Dependency* (New York: FWAA, 1941).

¹⁹³Enid C. Bashford, “Service to Selective Service Boards,” *The Family* (July, 1941): 157-159.

¹⁹⁴Harriet L. Parsons, “Case Work Service to a Selective Service Board,” *The Family* (March, 1941): 26-28.

in public departments hoped that their contacts with applicants would touch them deeper than simply an investigation of income, the majority of public welfare departments (most of which lacked trained case workers) tracked dependency claims as zealously as they would a claim for financial relief. A local selective service board member from central Indiana proudly noted that, “‘The FBI hasn’t anything on our county welfare department when it comes to making an investigation.’”¹⁹⁵ The zeal of public welfare officials to conduct deferment investigations seemed to confirm what many in the voluntary sector had argued, that the competence of public welfare agencies was determining eligibility for a given program, not interpersonal work with the applicant.

Private agencies’ involvement with draft boards proved unproductive. The Selective Service screening program itself was overwhelmed by the sheer number of draftees and limited by the lack of qualified personnel to administer it. The large number of men rejected early in the war on the grounds of mental health led to a shift in the military to emphasize treatment after breakdown rather than screening, and elevated the role of clinical psychologists and psychiatrists within the military.¹⁹⁶ As Swift noted in a review of the work during the war, information and referral services connected to draft boards did not perform as the “client seeking” mechanism he had hoped. “Experience proved such devices premature,” he concluded.¹⁹⁷ Most family agencies with referral services did not find many takers. The Baltimore Family Welfare Association found

¹⁹⁵Elizabeth Griffin and Corrine Callahan, “Reports from a Department of Public Welfare,” *The Family* (November, 1941): 239-243; “Selective Service and Public Welfare,” *Alabama Social Welfare* (Dec. 1943): 2-3; *Family Security Confidential Bulletin* No. 8 (August 2, 1941), CBSM Folder 1, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215.

¹⁹⁶ Herman, 89-92.

¹⁹⁷Linton Swift, “War Years in Family Social Work, 1938-1945,” *Highlights* (March, 1945): 4.

“very few applicants for service,” while agencies in the western U.S. in 1943 were still “in the stage of anticipating increased pressures rather than meeting unusual demands for existing resources.”¹⁹⁸

A similar pattern of uneasy relations and exchange of expertise for clients characterized private agency participation in the Surplus Marketing Administration’s food stamp plan, which ran from 1939 to 1943. In some regions, the SMA offered to let private agencies issue food stamps to their clients. The majority that participated simply provided a certification of eligibility to the issuing public agency, which then did not conduct a dependency investigation. In some areas, voluntary agencies proved the lesser of two stigmatized evils when seeking such aid. The Springfield, Massachusetts family agency claimed its private status was an advantage, for it allowed it to reach clients who were not taking public relief “because they would not apply to the public agency even though they needed the benefits of the surplus commodities.”¹⁹⁹ Other agencies, including Wilmington, were reluctant to participate at all. Mullen reported to Linton Swift that the SMA had approached her about using the Family Society to distribute stamps, but she told him “I am pretty skeptical as to how this may work in an agency doing the type of work that we feel is within our function.” Mullen may have thought that the stamps would re-emphasize the relief function her agency was trying to play down. Her board was split on the issue; some thought it would draw the private agency too close in to

¹⁹⁸“Welfare and Defense in Baltimore,” *Survey Midmonthly* (September, 1941): 270; Della Shapiro, “Trends in the Mississippi-Rocky Mountain Region,” *Highlights* (February, 1943): 153-156.

¹⁹⁹“Private Agencies and the Food Stamp Plan,” *Highlights* (March, 1941): p. 12-14; Margaret Wead to Mullen, October 1, 1941, Folder “Wilmington, DE, 1940-45”, Box 44, FSAA Records.

public welfare, while others saw it as a useful and necessary service. Ultimately, the Society declined to join the program, and the same went for most FWAA members.²⁰⁰

The place of casework agencies at the margins between welfare, charity, and broader social services was further underscored by their relationship with day care. Federally funded day care centers that proliferated during the war offered a concrete opportunity for family agencies, which often served as points of entry for families seeking day care. There had been a historic link between social work and day care. Day nurseries had originated in the late nineteenth century as a form of charitable outreach for children of poor, often single, mothers who had to leave their children to go to work. Women's work and day care were rarely embraced as positive social goods prior to World War Two, and the institutions that existed were clearly associated with the stigma of charity. The stigma was burned deeper by the common practice of using social workers to interview applicants for day care to determine if the mothers had thoroughly considered the consequences of depriving her children of her care during the day.²⁰¹

Wartime labor shortages introduced a new dynamic into the politics of day care. Public attitudes toward women's work shifted dramatically as the United States entered the war: 82 percent of one poll in 1936 opposed married women working, while in 1942, 60 percent favored it.²⁰² As married women began to take defense jobs, local and national organizations began to agitate for greater provision of day care resources. Councils of Social Agencies or other private welfare planning organizations began studying and

²⁰⁰ Mullen to Swift, September 26, 1941, Folder "Wilmington, DE, 1940-45", Box 44, FSAA Records; FSD Directors, March 17, 1942, May 19, 1942; FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, November 21, 1941, Folder 1, Box 7, FSAA Records.

²⁰¹ Elizabeth Rose, *A Mother's Job: The History of Day Care, 1890-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁰² *ibid*, p. 161.

expanding day care facilities at the outbreak of the war. The Lanham Act (Community Facilities Act) of 1941, which supplied federal money for community infrastructure such as recreation centers and hospitals, was amended in 1942 to provide money for local day care centers—in 1944, federal money helped support 3000 nurseries across the country.

Shifts in attitudes regarding mother's work did not erase ambivalence about it, or about providing day care to facilitate work. Even among most advocates of day care, it was seen as a necessary evil to help support production for the war effort. Federal administrators in the Children's Bureau in particular played an influential role in promoting the vision of motherhood and child raising as a patriotic duty equal to working in war industries. When outright opposition to mother's work became untenable amidst competing claims for women's labor, casework advocates shifted back toward controlling the intake points for day care.²⁰³ This was reflected at the local level by the widespread participation of local FWAA affiliates in planning and implementing wartime day care services. As shown above, the Wilmington agency contributed social workers as part of a study on day care, to interview women who "want to go to work" in 1942; in Hartford, the Family Service Society paid for one of its workers to do a day care study for the Board of Education in 1942; in New Haven, the Family Society established a consultation service for working mothers that served as a centralized intake service for the city's day care centers.²⁰⁴ Local agencies also reflected the opposition or ambivalence to the phenomenon they were reluctantly participating in. Family caseworkers often believed

²⁰³ *ibid*, p. 154.

²⁰⁴ Cora Rowzee, "Report of FWAA Contact," Nov. 16-17, 1942, Folder "Wilmington, DE, 1940-1945," Box 44, FSAA; *Family Security Confidential Bulletin* 21 (Feb. 12, 1942) and 23 (March 31, 1942), in CBSM Folder 2, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215, National Archives.

that young mothers might make emotionally immature decision about entering the workforce. The social worker assigned to one Philadelphia nursery thought some women sought work since they were “bored with her fairly recent role of mother.”²⁰⁵ Others, like Mullen from the Wilmington agency, feared that women would stay in the work force permanently.

“Service” to mothers seeking day care often consisted of rationing access to child care in the same way that charities had rationed relief, with a heavy emphasis on the possible emotional impact of assistance. A committee on day care chaired by a Cleveland Associated Charities worker urged that case workers could “help to estimate the less tangible losses or gains that separation from the mother may mean to a particular child, how it affects a woman’s relationship to her husband and her family, the affect of employment upon the mother’s health, how much disorganization of home life a particular family can stand....”²⁰⁶ The Cleveland agency subsequently threw itself into providing counseling for day care centers, but the issues did not become any clearer for them as their work proceeded. “One perplexing problem,” recalled a staff member, “was what to do about the mother who had made up her mind to work, though the family situation pointed to a definite need for her presence in the home.” Denying access to day care rarely discouraged the mother from working; they would simply find alternate means of care, most likely leaving them with relatives or friends as did most working mothers across the country. The Cleveland agency chose to acquiesce in these cases. “By friendly acceptance of the mother’s desire to work and assistance in planning for the children’s

²⁰⁵ Rose, p. 160.

²⁰⁶ “Information and Counseling Service in Relation to Day Care for Children” [June, 1942]; Minutes, Family Security Committee of Region V Defense Council, June 29, 1942, both in Regional FSC Folder 1, Box 1, E. 60, RG 215.

care, the way was left open to be of help later if the plan broke down.” In one study of the Baltimore Family and Children’s Society in 1942 and 1943, over half the mothers seeking assistance with child care demurred from counseling when it became clear the agency could not provide immediate help. The author noted that “most of the women who rejected counseling wanted to use the agency for the purpose of receiving immediate and business-like direction in the matter of effecting a specific type of child-care plan.” She added that many of the mothers had not been in contact with a social agency before and may not have wanted to “feel that they were in a position of being dependent on a caseworker.”²⁰⁷

Rationing day care placed family service agencies in a gray area between charity and service. As Elizabeth Rose’s study of day care in Philadelphia argues, day care began to shift during the war from a need dispensed by charity to a service provided by public institutions. The handful of publicly funded day care centers that persisted after the war, while at first seen as lacking the high standards of private agencies, came to be embraced by a wide range of clients since they offered a straightforward service without the charitable screening.²⁰⁸ Family agencies risked a community conception more in line with their traditional practices rather than a “modern” service agency. Day care was not financial assistance, but it remained a tangible good that they often controlled access to, determining if the applicants were truly needy. This extended the older tradition of the charity organization movement and the association of social work with (most often) denial of claims of need. Clients in Philadelphia tended to prefer newer day care centers

²⁰⁷ Waite, 337-338; Barbara Gray, “The Child-Care Problems of Forty-Six Working Mothers” (MS, Smith College School of Social Work, 1943), p. 47, 50; Rose, 158, 168.

²⁰⁸ Rose, p. 187.

established through public schools, rather than older charitable institutions, since the link to schools emphasized day care as a public service, rather than as a charitable discretion. Other observers noted the same trend; in Cleveland, some day care planners objected to locating counseling services in “welfare agencies... because of their identification in the minds of the public with services restricted to indigent groups.”²⁰⁹ Those family service agencies that threw themselves into day care counseling re-emphasized their connection with the problems of the poor, and with judgment rather than therapy, and undermined their outreach to other families.

Riding the coat tails of state expansion proved an unpopular strategy for most private agencies during the war period. On the local level, where many agencies had grown accustomed to working with or alongside public welfare institutions, experience with the Selective Service, food stamps and day care was varied. Some embraced the opportunity. But most were wary of drawing in too close to state authority, for a variety of reasons, particularly the fear that dependency investigations would reaffirm the link between private agencies and welfare, and a reluctance to do what seemed properly the work of public agencies. These trumped the possibility of using such service as a means to introduce to both local leaders and the community at large to the types of personal service a family agency might provide. The most common wartime engagement, controlling intake at day care agencies, reinforced rather than redefined more traditional images of charity. Caution prevailed. Frank Hertel, head of the FWA of Minneapolis, challenged his fellow member agencies not to get stuck in this rut, to “avoid historical

²⁰⁹ Rose, p. 169; Minutes, Family Security Committee of Region V Defense Council.

ways of doing things” which “present rigid alignments.”²¹⁰ Such caution left many agencies operating in much the same fashion as they had since the Depression: as a source of supplementary aid on the fringes of public welfare, with occasional opportunities to provide personality “adjustments.”

A resurgence of voluntarism during the war offered family agencies an alternative to allying with the state. The war offered a very pragmatic, and attractive, opportunity for voluntary agencies: war-related private fundraising. Local community chests in 1941 met nearly 100 percent of their goals, their highest rate of success since 1920, raising over \$100 million, and many local campaigns found themselves exceeding their goals. The American Red Cross, in separate campaigns, raised millions more, as did an emerging group of war chests established for overseas relief.²¹¹ Swift observed in 1942 that private fundraising was working well, and that established groups such as the American Social Hygiene Association had raised money for war-related projects. If they could come up with a program built around war needs, Swift suggested, they would be able to tap into this funding.²¹² The FWAA developed a proposal for the National War Appeals Committee—a private fundraising organization that consolidated a number of separate war relief appeals—that would offer the services of the national association to non-member agencies and to “selected communities which now have no adequate private case-work program.” The FWAA application pointed out the range of problems affecting defense-impacted areas, including family disorganization, family financial problems, industrial readjustment, and day care needs, and indicated the possible services that new

²¹⁰Frank Hertel, “Case Work Services Offered by Private Agencies,” *The Family* (June, 1942): 129-134.

²¹¹*People and Events: A History of the United Way* (Alexandria, V.A.: United Way of America, 1977), p. 82-89.

²¹²Swift, “Information Memorandum,” September 4, 1942, Folder 16, Box 14, FSAA Records.

agencies could offer: family information services, family counseling, financial planning, vocational advice, day care services, and provision of case work services to other agencies, among others.²¹³

To pull off this top-down expansion of private agencies, the FWAA found it necessary to turn to the organizational resources of federal public welfare to get off of the ground—yet another reminder of how radically the organization of social welfare had changed in the past decade. Swift took the plan to Washington to ask for help from the Bureau of Public Assistance for selecting a six to twelve towns that could benefit from the program, since the FWAA did not have the resources or field staff to conduct such an investigation on its own. Swift had to carefully present this request, to avoid the impression that his organization was using the cover of the war to try to undercut the position of public welfare agencies. He framed his proposal to Jane Hoey, director of the BPA, by emphasizing that while they shared a goal of “local stimulation of public welfare development,” the outreach planned by the FWAA would aim at “developing a sound pattern of private case-work services in the new war-industry communities now possessing no adequate services, before the old-fashioned type of private ‘charity’ activities become too deeply rooted.”²¹⁴ Swift’s appeal pointed to the professional common ground between the FWAA and the BPA, and brought up the specter of a resurgence of regressive, pre-Depression social action. It apparently struck a chord. He reported back to the FWAA executive committee that he found a “friendly, cooperative

²¹³“Memorandum Prepared for National War Appeals Budget Committee,” January 8, 1943, Folder 16, Box 14, FSAA Records; revised version, February 2, 1943, Folder FWAA 1943, Box 142, BPA Correspondence, 1935-1948, RG 47. The National War Appeals Committee was incorporated into the National War Fund in early 1943. Harold J. Seymour, *Design for Giving: The National War Fund, 1943-1947* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947).

²¹⁴Linton Swift to Jane Hoey, February 11, 1943, Folder FWAA 1943, Box 12, BPA Correspondence.

relationship [which] typified a new attitude on the part of the Federal agencies and undoubtedly will prove to be helpful to the Association as well as to the Federal Government on this important endeavor.”²¹⁵ There was some grumbling among BPA staffers about their collaboration. One wrote to Hoey and asked, “Ought not the public agencies be encouraged to assume responsibility for all needs arising out of the war?”²¹⁶ But pragmatically, in areas where public agencies faced little likelihood of expansion, federal public administrators found sympathetic private organizations far preferable than more backward, locally run groups. It was no doubt easier for Hoey to swallow since the FWAA reached out to public welfare groups by staffing the program with former public welfare personnel.²¹⁷

Both the FWAA project and a parallel joint effort with several other national voluntary organizations were rejected by the War Appeals Fund since neither was related directly to overseas relief or the armed services, the two areas that the Fund was authorized to raise money for. The national agencies retitled their project American War-Community Services in mid-1943 and set out to raise money directly from Community Chests across the country, and the FWAA decided to use this money to finance its war service program.²¹⁸ But the exclusion from the National War Fund crippled the AWCS;

²¹⁵FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, February 9, 1943, Folder 2, Box 7, FSAA Records.

²¹⁶Rose J. McHugh to Jane Hoey, May 5, 1943, Folder FWAA 1943, Box 12, BPA Correspondence.

²¹⁷FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, November 12, 1943, Folder 2, Box 7, FSAA Records. Director Morris Zelditch, who had held positions in the Washington D.C. Board of Public Welfare and the U.S. Housing Authority, was seen by the FWAA executive committee as “especially valuable because of his relationships in Washington and the public welfare field;” field agents Cecile Whalen and Mary Palevsky had worked for the Detroit and New York City Public Welfare Departments, respectively.

²¹⁸Earl Parker, Memorandum, September 15, 1943, Folder 16, Box 14, FSAA Records; Rich, *Belief in People*, p. 148-149. The other proposal, organized under the name War Workers Services Inc., was a joint effort of the National Institute for Immigrant Welfare, the National Association of Public Health Nursing, the National Urban League, and the Young Women’s Christian Association.

local chests were “apathetic about this tardily-presented claim.”²¹⁹ The FWAA netted only \$150,000 from the drive, which meant that its War Service program was limited and did not get out into the field until early 1944. The bulk of the program’s activity fell in two areas: field work to consult with communities in defense-impacted areas who wished to establish private services, and outreach to new populations of clientele, particularly industrial workers. For the former, though the field staff visited over fifty communities, only one new agency was established: in the military boomtown of Mobile, Alabama.²²⁰

Giving “Outside Help” to “Normal, Healthy” Clients

The possibility of reorienting charity from almsgiving to a broader form of “helping” was most clearly evident in industrial social work. The FWAA’s War Service program’s outreach to war workers seemed even more promising than either a direct partnership with the state, or with an expansion strategy rooted solely in the voluntary sector. Zelditch announced that “counseling on problems of industrial adjustment” was one area where the staff saw a real opportunity for the FWAA to be of service.²²¹ Some agencies saw potential as well. The Boston Family Welfare Society conducted a survey in 1941 that showed that over a third of their cases dealt with work-related problems.²²² As with the draft, the burgeoning war industries were assembling a group of people

²¹⁹ *People and Events*, p. 94. The AWCS’s failure exhibited on a national scale the king-making role community chests played for voluntary organizations.

²²⁰“Summary of War Community Services Program of Family Welfare Association,” March 8, 1944; Zelditch, “Report on FWAA’s War Community Services for 1944,” both in Folder 16, Box 14, FSAA Records; Zelditch, “Report of F.W.A.A. War-Service Program, 1943-45,” *Highlights* (February, 1946): 158. The FWAA received \$150,000 from the AWCS by March 1945. “Association Support,” *Highlights* (March, 1945): 23.

²²¹Morris Zelditch, “Progress Report—War Service Program,” *Highlights* (March, 1944): 5-6.

²²²Haynes, p. 49-51. A similar study in St. Paul found many war work related problems, though few direct referrals from industry. Ralph Henry Smith, “Services to Employees of War Industries,” *Highlights* (November, 1942): 106.

seemingly ripe for casework services, yet in an arena without the taint of the dependency investigations that dogged the Selective Service programs and day care intake. It was in this area where caseworkers got their first sustained experience with working with the non-poor. Industrial counseling suggested some of the potential of reaching out to the employed, but some of the pitfalls as well, particularly the tarnished reputation of social work.

Counseling to war workers was certainly not the brainchild of the FWAA.

“Industrial counseling” had already had one heyday following World War One, one element of welfare capitalism that characterized parts of the industrial economy in the 1920s. In that period, some leaders of critical subsectors of the U.S. economy, mostly larger, capital-intensive firms, realized that the disruptions and costs caused by employee turnover and absenteeism made it worth efforts to try to make the workplace experience more attractive and to promote loyalty to the firm. By the 1920s firms were offering a wide range of non-economic perks to employees, ranging from company-promoted social events to medical services, in order to encourage employees to stay. Included among those were social work and psychiatric services, pioneered by Metropolitan Life and Macy’s.²²³

The aspirations to infuse industrial counseling with the techniques of social case work gained ground with research into industrial psychology. This was most clearly evident in the famous Western Electric research project at the Hawthorne Works in

²²³Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 179-183; Mary Palevsky, *Counseling Services for Industrial Workers* (New York: Family Welfare Association of America, 1945): 4-5; Walkowitz, p. 42-43.

Chicago in the 1920s, where, as one writer put it, “workers’ feelings and attitudes were demonstrated to be quite ponderable factors in production.”²²⁴ The study suggested that if management invested in paying attention to how workers felt, not only about their workplace but also about problems outside the factory, it might dissipate worker resentment, increase productivity, and perhaps forestall unionization. But typically, industrial counselors often had little of the psychological or social work training that the Western Electric project called for. Their general role was as an information resource for workers on community facilities, as well as “interpreting” regulations or workplace relationships that were causing problems. Their most common location in a plant was a company’s personnel office, making it highly unlikely that workers would confide anything personal to the counselor.²²⁵

With World War Two, case workers from private agencies sought to repackage industrial counseling as a counseling service first and foremost, with concrete services as tools in the relationship. The high turnover at many war production plants invigorated the movement. War productivity provided the strongest argument, as it had for muting objections to day care. Case work activist Donald Howard of the Russell Sage Foundation’s Department of Charity Organization wrote that the first priority of social work during the war should be to combat worker absenteeism: “Danger of retarding the war effort places absenteeism high on anyone’s list of public enemies; skills from many fields, including social work, are being rallied to help keep men and women at their work benches and thus to keep tanks rolling and planes flying.” His more radical colleague at

²²⁴Palevsky, p. 4; Elton Mayo, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization* (New York: MacMillen, 1937).

²²⁵Altman, p. 107; Palevsky, p. 8.

Russell Sage, Mary Van Kleeck, also allowed that, "If [human relations] are unsatisfactory, they interfere with production and hence obstruct the war effort." Caseworkers affiliated with unions chimed in. Ruth Altman, Assistant Supervisor of the Jewish Children's Bureau in Chicago, and member of the Social Service Employees Union Local 39, wrote that workplace social work aimed "to try to help the soldiers of production meet more adequately the many home front problems that engender 'absenteeism,' and, in this way, to gear the social services to the wartime task of speeding production for victory."²²⁶ Federal agencies concerned with wartime productivity, including the War Production Board's Office of Labor Production, and the War Manpower Commission, also pushed the idea of industrial counseling "as a practical measure to keep workers on the job."²²⁷

Some unions reached out to private agencies in order to access to social service networks. Detroit's war industries served as one of the focal points for supplying casework to unionized workers. A joint committee of the United Auto Worker's War Policy Division, and the federal War Labor Board's Office of Labor Production investigated unusually high absentee rates in the area, particularly at Ford's Willow Run Bomber Plant, estimated to run two or three times the national average.²²⁸ This was driven in part by the increase in women workers in the area, which nearly doubled during

²²⁶Howard, "American Social Work and World War II," p. 140; Mary Van Kleeck, "Social Work on the Industrial Frontier," *The Compass* (November, 1944): 3; Ruth Altman, "Bringing Case Work to a Labor Union," *The Family* (May, 1945): 106.

²²⁷Palevsky, p. 35. The Office of Community War Services convened a Counseling Committee in [1943?], chaired by a representative of the War Manpower Commission and including a number of private case work representatives, to generate a handbook on employee counseling. See Counseling Committee, Office of Community War Services *A Guide for Establishment and Operation of In-Plant and Community Information and Counseling Services for Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Security Agency, 1944).

²²⁸Lowell J. Carr and James E. Stermer, *Willow Run: A Study of Industrialization and Cultural Inadequacy* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1952): 209-210; Alfred H. Katz, "A Counseling Outpost for War Workers," *The Family* (April, 1945): p. 44.

the war. Many of the new women workers were married women who, in trying to work and hold families together in communities drastically short of housing, child care and transportation, missed work in order to deal with these problems—50 percent more frequently than their male colleagues.²²⁹ This investigation concluded that by helping workers connect to community resources, they might be able to stabilize their job attendance. Willow Run's program was initiated by the local Housing Authority, which got the FWAA agency in Ypsilanti to open a branch office at the plant, endorsed by Local 50 of the UAW. Other prominent experiments in linking private social service, unions, and war production included Altman's Social Service Employees Union outposts in United Packinghouse Workers and United Electrical Workers union halls in Chicago; a Philadelphia effort initiated by case worker members of the SSEU in conjunction with United Electrical Workers at the Philco plant, which was co-sponsored by the Philadelphia Family Society and the Jewish Welfare Society; a Cleveland program co-sponsored by the Cleveland Industrial Union Council and the private Welfare Federation; and a Brooklyn program run by the private Brooklyn Council for Social Planning and two U.E. locals.²³⁰

Case workers from private agencies who worked with union clients were enthused by the experience. Ruth Altman, who helped run the Chicago program, was effusive in

²²⁹Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 123-124. The bibliography in the Counseling Committee's handbook (see n. 61) indicates that women workers and aircraft factories were both points of concern for writers on the subject; Counseling Committee, p. 21-22.

²³⁰Palevsky, p. 29-32; Arthur Leader, "Social Service for War Workers," *The Family* (June, 1943): p. 148-152; Altman, p. 106, 109; "Labor and Counseling," *Survey Midmonthly* (March, 1945): 91-92; Callman Rawley, "New Leaven for Social Agencies," *Survey Midmonthly* (June, 1943): 199; Rev. J. Emmet McDonald, "The Personal Service Department: A Cooperative Project of Labor and Social Work," *Catholic Charities Review* (November, 1944): 229-233; Bertha C. Reynolds, "Labor and Social Work," *Social Work Yearbook, 1945* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1945): 230-234.

describing the “enrichment that all our staff gained from experience ... of working with this new type of client, usually a strong functioning person just needing some help over a rough spot. Very different from the more typically neurotic and often ‘untreatable’ adults who find their way into most private agencies today!” Similarly, Alfred Katz, the caseworker who directed the Willow Run program, noted that “in contrast with the group of chronically dependent clients that every family agency has known, this group of war workers is a healthy and normal population ... strikingly capable of utilizing the help offered.” How radically the demographics of family service clientele differed from union clients is unclear, though some studies suggest some overlap. The situation under which assistance was sought surely mattered as well; Altman noted the self confidence of workers approaching the counselors as equals, instead of in a relationship of dependency.²³¹

Unions enlisted case work resources as a means to tap into pre-existing networks of social services, but caseworkers hoped that this was just the beginning. Of the 1000 cases in Detroit, 45 percent were referred to housing agencies, 20 percent dealt with child care or family issues, 10 percent were for health related issues, 10 percent for help with Social Security programs, and 8 percent for legal aid. The Willow Run program, with an in-house social worker, reported work on 17 cases of child care issues, 13 cases of marital problems, 21 for “case work situations” involving financial need, 7 for medical care, 22 for “miscellaneous case work”, and 14 referrals to outside agencies.²³² Day care

²³¹Altman, p. 109; Katz, p. 48-49. An editorial rejoinder to Katz in *The Family* argued that in fact, most clients of family agencies were not “chronically dependent,” citing statistics showing only a quarter of their clients were on relief. “Counseling at Willow Run,” *The Family* (April, 1945): p. 76.

²³²Katz, p. 46-47; Robert L. Kinney, “Union Counseling Bridges a Gap,” *Survey Midmonthly* (April, 1945): 106-107.

needs were the most often cited problem in other programs.²³³ A similar pattern held in programs run within federal agencies. Genevive Chase, who headed the Office of Emergency Management's counseling program for its own employees, reported that some wartime officials who had been recruited from industry saw counseling as a way to reduce turnover in their agencies. Again, employees often used such counselors as simply information resources, particularly in navigating Washington's saturated wartime housing supply. Pragmatic requests from an "independent, self-sustaining, competent clientele" rather than dependent clients of family service agencies was unsurprising. But, argued Chase of the OEM, such a request was "a means to approach another matter of deeper concern to them."²³⁴ Material assistance for both client and caseworker was the means to begin a relationship, but for caseworkers, it would lead to deeper issues presumably troubling the client.

The association between social work and charity proved the largest obstacle in reaching out to union members. Even in union-sponsored social work, as Ruth Altman noted, "labor's ancient prejudices against 'charity' and all its handmaidens met us head-on from the outset."²³⁵ Since social work had maintained, and even deepened, its identity with relief during the Depression, case workers faced a significant challenge in reaching out to a group where the ethic of self-help was strongly rooted. The group of rural immigrants who had migrated to Willow Run in particular, said Alfred Katz, have been "forced to work out its problems itself. There has consequently grown up in its mores

²³³Altman, p. 109; Rawley, p. 199.

²³⁴Genevive Chase, "The Counselor in the War Agency," *The Family* (December, 1943): 293-299; Margaret Barron, "Employee Counseling in a Federal Agency," *Personnel Administration* (March, 1942): p. ?

²³⁵Altman, p. 107.

more opposition than is common to the concept that outside help can be used in a self-respecting way. The tradition is one of 'seeing it through' with the aid of family and friends."²³⁶ Nearly every project report associated with wartime industrial social work echoed these sentiments.

The conditions under which aid was offered did affect the response of workers to the offerings of case workers. Bertha Reynolds, a prominent progressive social worker who ran a casework program affiliated with the National Maritime Union, praised the effect of this new clientele on her staff; they had to "shake themselves free from rigidities that develop in any profession and learn to apply in new ways the principle of knowing their community."²³⁷ Some of the experiments found more success by using the term "union counselors" rather than "social worker," which "helped dissipate some of the workers' suspicion and misunderstanding of organized social work."²³⁸ Stressing the union origins of the work relieved some of the reluctance associated with the personnel management variation of industrial casework. It also chipped away at the often hierarchical relationship in which most case workers, no matter how well intentioned, acted vis-à-vis their clients. As Ruth Altman described, "persons using a facility of their own democratic organization, in a setting where they felt free and equal" behaved quite differently from clients for whom the case work relationship was linked to requests for monetary aid; "We have had to gulp and get used to being known informally as 'the girls'

²³⁶Katz, p. 48.

²³⁷ Bertha C. Reynolds, *An Uncharted Journey: Fifty Years of Growth in Social Work* (Silver Spring, M.D.: National Association of Social Workers Press, 1991), p. 242. Reynolds' work was sponsored by the United Seamen's Service, a USO equivalent established for the merchant marine; the USS paid for Reynolds and her caseworkers, but they worked under the authority of a Personal Service department created by the National Maritime Union.

²³⁸Katz, p. 45.

and still try to feel like ‘the social workers.’”²³⁹ Here, as in union drives in social agencies, democratic solidarity with working clients existed uncomfortably with professional identity.²⁴⁰

Emphasizing their work as “service,” and accepting payment, was one strategy that caseworkers used to emphasize their professional, rather than charitable, affiliation. Workers who visited plant counselors often tried to pay them for services rendered. Caseworkers initially found this disconcerting. Most involved in these industrial counseling experiments had not considered their work a commodity but rather still saw it as a form of helping despite their location in a factory. Many were hard-pressed to put an exact value on what they had provided. But some case workers realized that workers were more comfortable paying at least a symbolic fee since it denoted a distinctly different relationship with the case worker: they sought a service, not a handout. The practice of paycheck deductions by unions for contributions to local community chests, which became widespread during World War Two, was one useful tool for case workers who wanted to emphasize their “service” rather than charity. As Altman related, “We had to convince the otherwise very alert and progressive [union] regional director that workers were not taking charity in using welfare agencies but were making use of the very facilities that their taxes and contributions had already purchased.”²⁴¹ By stressing the idea that workers could, or already had, paid for the consultation, case workers pointed to the voluntary aspect of their practice and reassured workers that they were not

²³⁹Altman, p. 109.

²⁴⁰ Daniel Walkowitz, *Working With Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle Class Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

²⁴¹Altman, p. 107; Rawley, p. 198; Joseph Levy, “The Industrial Worker and Case Work,” *The Family* (April, 1943): 71-73.

getting something for nothing. Workers were entitled to these services because they had paid for them, either as consumers, charitable contributors or as taxpayers.

While working with industrial workers helped case workers realize how they might begin to reach out to new populations, bringing workers into the agencies themselves would prove to be difficult. Mary Van Kleeck argued that union-run programs would be more attractive to workers than using institutions that had, only a decade before, been the location of sparse private relief.²⁴² On the other side of the relationship, conservative board members of private agencies often resisted linking with unions. In Wilmington, Delaware, for instance, the Society saw the opportunity to help combat absenteeism with social work skill, but wrote to local personnel offices rather than unions. An FWAA representative reported in 1945 that the board of the Society, dominated by DuPont family members and employees, “Are said to want representation from labor but ‘they can’t find the right kind.’”²⁴³

Furthermore, in those unions that saw some value in providing some sort of counseling program, they often preferred to make it an in-house service. During the war, when union officials struggled to keep a no-strike pledge in effect, counseling served as one of the minor perks that unions could offer to restive workers—a trend that would continue in the post-war era when fringe benefits increased in importance in the gains of unionized workers. For the Detroit area, Mildred Jeffries of the Women’s Bureau of the UAW War Policy Division and Joseph Kowalski, educational director of the Michigan CIO, trained over 100 union “counselors” in 1943 who would serve as in-plant

²⁴²Van Kleeck, “Social Work on the Industrial Frontier,” p. 7.

²⁴³Directors, FSW, Oct. 19, 1943; Cecile Whalen, “Report of FWAA Contact,” March 19-20, 1945, Folder “Wilmington, 1940-45,” Box 44, FSAA Records.

information sources for workers to connect with outside agencies.²⁴⁴ In the postwar era, the AFL and CIO would establish their own national social service departments that focused on providing assistance to workers under union auspices.

Families, Marriage Counseling, and Paying for Help

Caseworkers in private agencies, regardless of the resistance among unionized workers to their services, still believed the non-poor offered an attractive client base to serve. Ruth Mann of the Jewish Social Service Association of New York read into the war the liberation of case work from its association with the poor: "... it would be recognized for what it always basically has been, a way of helping. This classless concept is in line with what the people of the United Nations are fighting for...." While most case work proponents were not as effusive as Mann, the idea of case work as a service appropriate for people regardless of economic station began to be taken seriously during the early 1940s. *Highlights* reprinted an editorial from the Scranton (Pa.) *Times*, which commented on the annual report of the Scranton Family Welfare Association. The editorialist picked up on the point made by Judge T. Linus Hobson, vice president of the Scranton agency, that families of all economic levels could benefit from family guidance: "Average families do not require family welfare guidance. They master their problems, but a surprising number of individuals with family responsibilities need it. Some of these people include well and comfortably situated people from the standpoint of position and income or possessions." As with industrial workers, some of the hopes of reaching middle class people were still rooted in adjusting to financial difficulties. As Frances

²⁴⁴Robert L. Kinney, "Union Counseling Bridges a Gap," *Survey Midmonthly* (April, 1945): 106-107.

Taussing, executive director of the Jewish Social Service Association of New York (where Mann was a district supervisor) observed, rising costs of living during the war were creating tensions in middle class families, which tended to aggravate personal and family problems. Since Pearl Harbor, she reported, 40 percent of her agency's requests for help were from "white collar" people, who were showing "an increased and thoughtful use of casework to help consider their problems more clearly and work out the necessary readjustments for themselves."²⁴⁵

Case workers watched as non-professionals of all stripes tried to capitalize on both public and private forums where people sought help. Two radio personalities of the 1930s and 1940s, John J. Anthony of the Good-Will Hour and A.L. Alexander of the Alexander Mediation Board, particularly irked professional case workers. Morris Zelditch (head of the FWAA War Service Program) asserted that most social workers "have been revolted at the spectacle of these amateurs playing with the fire of the deep emotional problems they so carelessly paraded before millions of listeners on the radio."²⁴⁶ Case workers were infuriated by the prospect of being undercut by such charlatans at the moment that public attitudes toward help from strangers seemed to be shifting. Zelditch's comments came in the context of a review of Lee Steiner's *Where Do People Take Their Troubles?*, an exposé of the types of characters who preyed on people seeking personal advice from strangers. Steiner's question, "where [do] people who aren't poor take their troubles," revealed a range of quackery, from unlicensed psychologists to psychic mediums. Steiner, who had been trained as a psychiatric social

²⁴⁵Ruth Z. S. Mann, "The War and Case Work," *The Family* (March, 1943): 8; "Who Needs Family Guidance?" *Highlights* (May, 1940): 39; "White Collar Troubles," *Survey Midmonthly* (February, 1944): 57.

²⁴⁶Zelditch, "Book Reviews," *The Family* (November, 1945): 277.

worker, perceived a growing desire by people to use the advice of strangers yet saw them using a market with porous professional boundaries. To the dismay of Zelditch and others, she mentioned private family agencies only in passing, as being limited to the underprivileged.²⁴⁷ Steiner's book precisely illustrated the opportunity and dilemma private family agencies faced in the 1940s: expanding opportunity as people became more willing to seek counseling, and a crippling association of family agencies and social case work solely with poor relief.

Re-labeling casework as "counseling" to emphasize its focus on personal problems was one solution for private family service. As Annette Garrett, a prominent casework educator at the University of North Carolina, observed immediately after the war, most of the expansion of casework during the war happened through counseling programs. Counseling had become widespread enough by 1944 for the editors of *The Family* to try to come to a satisfactory definition of what counseling was, eventually boiling it down simply to interviews where one person came to another for advice.²⁴⁸ Garrett attributed the popularity of counseling in part to the association of "case work" with either intrusiveness or with the impoverished, lamenting that "case work seems to be more palatable if it is called by almost any other name." But many programs that offered counseling were often not run by professionals; for instance, union members who had been trained in-house. Garrett claimed that counseling "already had for many people a significance that does not imply high case work standards."²⁴⁹ Caseworkers were already in a profession with hazy professional boundaries and low barriers to entry. As it became

²⁴⁷Lee Steiner, *Where Do People Take Their Troubles?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1945; Armed Services Edition): p. 6-7, 18.

²⁴⁸"Counseling," *The Family* (March, 1944): p. 37-38.

²⁴⁹Annette Garrett, "The Professional Basis of Social Case Work," *The Family* (July, 1946): 169.

increasingly apparent that professionalism was to be a key factor in distinguishing private family service from public welfare, such issues carried significant weight with private caseworkers.

Private casework agencies found their most plausible avenue into this field to be an emphasis on solving family problems, regardless of the family's economic station. Rhetorically, "the family" had been at the center of the FWAA's concerns for two decades. Its professional journal bore that name since 1920, and its name change from the cumbersome American Association for Organizing Family Social Work to the more streamlined Family Welfare Association of America in 1930 indicated the aspirations of its national leadership. In the 1930s, local affiliates began following the lead of the national organization; by 1936, a majority of these agencies had moved from "Associated Charities" to use either "family welfare" or "family service" in their titles.²⁵⁰ But titles did not necessarily reflect programs or priorities, which had for decades focused on individual problems. As the FWAA Executive Committee discussed in 1945, their agencies needed some sort of basis for public recognition "beyond case work method but more specific than the whole area of individual human personality and relationships," and that "family" might be the appropriate focus.²⁵¹

Caseworkers found it easy to identify myriad threats to the family during wartime. During the Depression, the impact that unemployment and relief might have on the patriarchal structure of the traditional family was a constant topic of debate in social work circles, the presumption being that unemployment undermined the role of the father and led to family instability. As employment picked up in the early 1940s, caseworkers began

²⁵⁰Rich, *Belief in People*, p. 137.

²⁵¹FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, February 16, 1945, Folder 12, Box 6, FSAA Records.

to warn of the threats that *prosperity* posed to family stability. Mullen informed the board of her Wilmington agency that “the universal demand for man power” would tempt men to desert their families.” Florence Day, director of the Smith College School of Social Work, argued in 1943 that increased financial resources led to “hasty planning and frequently unwise action” by which she meant either impulsive marriage or divorce. Families which had been forced together by the circumstances of the Depression now split apart, she argued, before they have been stable enough to know what “satisfactions and adjustments lie in store.”²⁵² Other war stresses, including geographic mobility to centers of war production or separations caused by military service, also loomed as threats to family stability. Again, Mullen warned her board of the “potential breakdown of family life” caused by the separation of young couples.²⁵³ Dr. Emily Mudd, a national leader of the emerging family counseling movement, reported increased numbers of young couples seeking aid from the Marriage Council of Philadelphia with war-related problems. Counseling could and must help reinforce these relationships, she argued, since strong marriages are “the foundation for strength in national life.”²⁵⁴ No less an authority than sociologist Ernest Burgess of the University of Chicago declared marriage counseling essential to the changing nature of modern families. Broader trends such as the move toward companionate marriages, increased leisure time, and the decreasing importance of local social controls, he argued in 1943, all fed into increased risks for

²⁵²E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 27, 1942; Florence R. Day, “Sharpening Methods to Meet Present Needs,” *The Family* (February, 1944): 363-364.

²⁵³E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 19, 1943.

²⁵⁴Emily H. Mudd and Margaret M. Everton, “Marriage Problems in Relation to Selective Service,” *The Family* (June, 1941): 129-130.

divorce and dissolution of marriage. After the war the U.S. would face “the final reckoning with the effects of hasty and hurried-up marriages of the war-time period.”²⁵⁵

Some family casework agencies saw marriage counseling as a way out of their identity with the problems of poverty. The Cincinnati Associated Charities in the mid-1930s was one of the earliest FWAA members to specifically offer marriage counseling. The agency’s executive director, Anna Budd Ware, was appointed head of an FWAA committee to investigate the field in 1940. A similar program in Milwaukee in 1939 aimed at marriage problems rooted in what were deemed to be purely psychological, rather than financial, issues.²⁵⁶ As the committee report, issued in 1943, observed, “marriage counseling services have always been part of the family agency program,” but generally they had been linked to economic problems faced by troubled families.²⁵⁷ Burgess believed that many FWAA members were equipped to deal with such problems, but “Nevertheless, in the eyes of the public, the family welfare agency is synonymous with economic dependency, which prevents other groups from availing themselves of its counseling services.”²⁵⁸

De-emphasizing material relief and proffering counseling services was a serious challenge to private agencies. Marjorie Battersby of the Providence Family Welfare

²⁵⁵Ernest Burgess, “Marriage Counseling in a Changing Society,” *Marriage and Family Living* (Winter, 1943): 8-10.

²⁵⁶Rich, 141-142; Mabel Rasey, “Marriage Counseling in a Family Agency,” *The Family* (April, 1943): 65-71.

²⁵⁷“Report of the Family and Marriage Counseling Committee,” May, 1943, p. 2, Folder 2, Box 7, FSAA Records. Some agencies linked marriage counseling and anti-poverty work; the Niagara Falls (NY) Family Welfare Society reported that an experiment with 20 young couples in financial trouble, in which the agency tried to “build up self-respect and responsibility”, pushed 16 couples to being self-supporting. Mary E. Kelly, “Services to Young Couples,” *Highlights* (October, 1941): 84. The techniques used in identifying “problem” marriages and families ranged from the crudely “environmental” (did homes reflect “ingenuity and imagination and liking for family life”?) to psychological (“struggle for domination between spouses”). Mary Hester, “Field Teaching in a Private Agency,” *The Family* (March, 1941): 17.

²⁵⁸Burgess, p. 10.

Association lamented that “There is no opportunity to hold the client by tangible help”—i.e., money—to allow time for the social worker to establish a rapport with a client.²⁵⁹ Many agencies that had at least rhetorically embraced the new look were often perplexed on how to put it into practice. As the FWAA committee on fee charging warned that “most agencies are much more certain now of their skill in dealing with practical problems than in marriage counseling.”²⁶⁰ As declining caseloads early in the 1940s had demonstrated, it was financial assistance, and not counseling, that drew most clients. Critics of private agencies wondered if they were really capable of delivering the services they had claimed to master. Lee Steiner, author of *Where Do People Take Their Troubles?* wrote to *The Family* in 1944 that agency staffs were papering over their lack of experience with non-economic problems, afraid of backlash from their boards.²⁶¹ Another writer to *The Family* argued that social workers hadn’t effectively publicized their capabilities, and thus “particularly the middle-income group” was “unaware of the real nature and possibilities of social work.”²⁶²

Nonetheless, particularly at the national level, private family agencies were increasingly identified as a source of expertise on marital problems. The national office of the FWAA discovered in early 1945 that *Modern Romance*, a New York-based tabloid had, unsolicited, listed the FWAA as a resource for information for unmarried mothers. The article generated 130 inquiries to the office, which the FWAA, caught unprepared, had to refer to New York’s largest private family agency, the Community Service

²⁵⁹ Marjorie Battersby, “Student Field Work in Wartime: In a Family Agency”, *The Family* (January, 1944): 333-334.

²⁶⁰ “Fee Charging in the Family Agency.”

²⁶¹ Lee R. Steiner, “Readers’ Forum,” *The Family* (June, 1944): 154; “Some Family Case Work Statistics From Private Agencies,” *Social Service Review* (September, 1944): 361-363.

²⁶² “Readers’ Forum,” *The Family* (April, 1946): 78.

Society.²⁶³ Moreover, as Charlotte Towle, a social work educator, later recalled, family agencies received some overflow from a burgeoning market for mental health in general. With the war drawing psychiatrists into the service, Towle said, “social case workers became lay psychiatrists in clinics and social agencies.... the result was [a] terrific push toward social work becoming increasingly absorbed in direct psychotherapeutic activity.”²⁶⁴ The incident pointed ahead to the challenge private agencies would face in the immediate postwar period: how to match their organizational image and resources to an expanding middle class becoming preoccupied with anxieties over the stability of family life.

Two superficial adjustments indicated a move by some family agencies to dissociate themselves both from welfare and from charity. Trends in changes of agency names during the early 1940s indicated a preference for “service” or “consultation” over “welfare” or “charity.”²⁶⁵ The Family Society of Wilmington dropped its “formerly Associated Charities” off of its letterhead in 1940, and added a second telephone listing in 1946 under “Family Service.”²⁶⁶ Having reacted to the stigmatization of “charity” in an earlier period, FWAA leaders now backpedaled from the word “welfare.” The Family Welfare Society of Boston wrestled throughout the thirties with the problem that “the word ‘welfare’ during these years when public relief was required in mounting amounts, had become a synonym for ‘relief.’” It put off changing its name until 1943 when it finally decided that the name was distasteful to “people not dependent,” particularly servicemen and war workers who had personal problems but who “refused to come to us

²⁶³FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, February 16, 1945, Folder 12, Box 6, FSAA Records.

²⁶⁴Wendy B. Posner, “Charlotte Towle: A Biography” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1986): p. 196.

²⁶⁵“Changes in Member Agency Names,” *Highlights* (February, 1942): 158-159.

²⁶⁶FSD Directors, April 16, 1940; January 15, 1946.

because the word 'welfare' stamped us as a relief-disbursing organization."²⁶⁷ Linton Swift admitted in 1941, "We don't like the word 'welfare.'"²⁶⁸

The other strategy to disassociate themselves with the welfare system was for agencies to embrace the practice that industrial counselors found useful: to start charging fees for people to use their services. The New York City Jewish Social Service Association pioneered this approach in 1942 when it opened its "Consultation Clinic," which charged a sliding fee of \$1 to \$5 for a visit by people of "moderate means" who wished to use the JSSA's case work resources to work out "family or psychological difficulties."²⁶⁹ The center opened in the wake of a well-planned outreach program to other social service agencies, employers' associations, unions, and department stores, as well as an active public relations campaign.²⁷⁰ The Clinic stressed its professional nature, to reassure potential clients of its usefulness as well as to emphasize its respectability. "It is the best answer to the host of charlatans who have begun to advertise 'personal counsel' in the newspaper, promising psychoanalysis for \$1," claimed a *Reader's Digest* article on the clinic in 1943. "It provides a respectable, convenient and satisfying means of getting the best guidance to be had."²⁷¹ Linking their offerings to more established professions, proponents noted, "It fits in with the accepted pattern of paying for a professional service rendered, as when a doctor or lawyer is involved." The *Reader's*

²⁶⁷Malcom Nichols, "How to Change that Agency Name," *Highlights* (November, 1943): 104-107.

²⁶⁸FSC Subcommittee on Volunteers, Minutes, September 9, 1941, Box 2, Entry 59, RG 215, N.A.

²⁶⁹"Fee Service," *Survey Midmonthly* (March, 1942): 89.

²⁷⁰Frances T. Levinson and Joseph Stein, "Fee for Casework Service," *Survey Midmonthly* (December, 1943): 331.

²⁷¹Murray Bloom and Edith Stern, "Consultation Clinic for Human Problems," *Reader's Digest* (April, 1943): 109-112. The article was condensed from an April, 1943 article in the *Kiwanis* magazine. See also, Walkowitz, p. 206.

Digest article played up the similarity of the clinic to a doctor's office.²⁷² An additional attraction was that the act of paying itself helped "give the client a sense of control in asking for help."²⁷³

The repackaging of casework as a consumer service addressed many of the changes facing private family agencies. The FWAA immediately convened a committee to study the possibilities of fee service, chaired by prominent case work professor Gordon Hamilton of the New York School of Social Work and including Frances Levinson of the New York JSSA. The committee report pointed to the interest of case workers in reaching the non-poor, the absorption of relief provision by public agencies, and the growing popularity of counseling programs, particularly marriage counseling, which "suggests the possibility that family agencies would also be acceptable to the community under a fee system." As Lee Steiner, who had moved into private practice, told *The Family*, "I have not sold what the social agencies call case work. I have sold counseling service stripped of all its philanthropic connotations and down to the rock-bottom concepts of what I had to offer that is worth paying for."²⁷⁴ The spread of publicly subsidized day care services, expanded under the wartime Lanham Act, also demonstrated the possibility of charging for services that were once thought to be charitable. Public day care, however, also suggested that fee charging was not a panacea—in Philadelphia, according to one study, clients sought out public day care with a flat fee rather than private day care with a sliding fee precisely to distinguish

²⁷²Levinson and Stein, p. 331; Bloom and Stern, p. 109.

²⁷³Levinson and Stein, p. 331. As Daniel Walkowitz has noted, agencies dominated by followers of Otto Ranke, as were many of the Jewish agencies in New York, as well as the Family Society of Wilmington, were particularly attracted to this feature of fee-paying, since it emphasized client control and participation, key elements of the Rankean approach. Walkowitz, p. 367n97.

²⁷⁴Steiner, "Reader's Forum," p. 154.

themselves from charity cases. Promoting case work as a consumer good also ran the risk of alienating donors; as the report noted, “There might be some feeling that it is not necessary to contribute to a ‘self-supporting’ service;” i.e., that the donations agencies still relied on might dry up if case work were perceived to be a money-making venture.²⁷⁵

Voluntarism and Case Work Agencies

This final issue pointed to some of the inherent problems with the identity of profession and institution. While both caseworker and private agencies recognized the fact that the expansion of public welfare challenged their *raison d'être*, the latter, particularly agency boards, were committed first and foremost to continuing a private charitable tradition. Case work in and of itself was not the reason many board members had come to serve at these agencies; as Else Jockel of the Wilmington agency had laughed, many still saw it as a convenient way to centralize their own giving or a means through which to sponsor a summer camp for poor children. Leaders of the field recognized that the tenuous commitment to case work by private donors might spell trouble for the future of family agencies. Barklie Henry, the president of New York City's CSS, observed that family agencies had not proved their expertise in dealing with emotions. The layman who supported them was likely to scrutinize their claims more closely, particularly as taxes increased to support public welfare. Noting that donors “take a lot on faith,” he argued that sunny claims about “curing” maladjusted families might well procure a response along the lines of “‘Come now, can they really do all this?’” Thus far, concluded Henry, contributors’ “confidence in the past records of social

²⁷⁵“Fee Charging in the Family Agency,” [1943], Folder 2, Box 7, FSAA Records.

agencies, his trust in the specific agency, perhaps his confidence in the persons responsible for it, cause him to dismiss his doubts and once more reach for his checkbook.” Such concerns were echoed in the reports of the field staff of the FWAA, such as their worries about the excessive delegation by the Wilmington agency’s board to Mullen. However, Henry warned, the day may come when “we wake up some day and find that case work as practiced by the private agencies no longer is taken as seriously as we, who believe in it, would like to see it taken.”²⁷⁶

Caseworkers in private agencies benefited from the anti-statism of many of their boards. The ideological underpinnings of American voluntarism are a frequent explanation for the persistence of the voluntary sector. From the interest taken in American voluntarism by Alexis de Tocqueville in the nineteenth century, it has extended through contemporary scholarship that tends to overstate (or at least embrace ahistorically) an “American preference for private auspices.”²⁷⁷ Scholars writing from a variety of perspectives have undermined the role of ideology in explaining the prominence of voluntary and private sector institutions in social provision in the United States.²⁷⁸ However, when looking at the dynamics of the voluntary sector itself, the significance of the ideological power of voluntarism must be taken seriously—though

²⁷⁶Henry, 319-321. Henry was not the only one to worry about wartime taxes discouraging donors; an FWAA committee in 1942 anticipated that taxes and inflation would bring the “brunt of financial stringency” onto their members. Committee on Family Welfare Program, Minutes, February 7, 1942, Folder 52, Box 10, FSAA Records.

²⁷⁷Kirsten A. Grønberg, “Markets, Politics, and Charity: Nonprofits in the Political Economy,” in Walter W. Powell and Elisabeth S. Clemens, eds. *Private Action and the Public Good* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998): 138. For an argument for the persistent impact of voluntarism, see Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America’s Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

²⁷⁸Jacob S. Hacker, “The Historical Logic of National Health Insurance: Structure and Sequence in the Development of British, Canadian, and U.S. Medical Policy,” *Studies in American Political Development* 12 (Spring, 1998): 62-65.

with careful attention to its change over time. Boards of directors are the most likely place to start. Most social service organizations with roots in the middle and upper classes existed at the whim of their boards in the first part of the twentieth century. Boards were generally drawn from community elites who could tap into local wealth. Many served these organizations through some combination of altruism, social peer group obligation, or a commitment to voluntary institutions.

The reality of the Depression convinced many board members of the need for a mixed welfare state that at some level, no matter how minimal, assured both a public and private role in maintaining a social safety net. In this crucial period of the 1930s and 1940s, though, the commitment of board members to voluntarism helped them “take a lot on faith.” As Frederick A. O. Schwartz, scion of the retailing fortune, who chaired a research committee for the NYC Community Services Society, asked, “should private social agencies be continued?” and partly answered his own question by observing that “in a democracy we should not leave everything to the state.”²⁷⁹ Another writer, discussing charitable tax deductions for income taxes, observed that “Mr. X is going to say goodbye to Y dollars anyway. If Mr. X desires, he, and not a Senate bloc, can decide how a good deal of Y will be spent. If Mr. X shrugs his shoulders and says he can’t be bothered, the government will spend it for him. But Mr. X, being an American, probably would like to have a direct say in the matter.”²⁸⁰ Such an ideological predilection, which varied from member to member and agency to agency, nonetheless gave the professional staff some leeway to prove the efficacy of their methods. Moreover, the attachment of long-serving board members to a particular institution cannot be understated as well.

²⁷⁹Frederick A. O. Schwartz, “Research for Welfare,” *Survey Midmonthly* (December, 1942): 331-332.

²⁸⁰C. Edgar Butler, “Taxes and/or Gifts,” *Survey Midmonthly* (September, 1941): 254-265.

Having invested time and money into building an institution that they saw as a tangible symbol of their community, they were loath to submit it to the process of self-liquidation that progressives advocated. Private agencies had a worth in and of themselves, were embedded in local politics and society, and were often defined against the state, which made board members especially tolerant of the intangible work that went on within them.

Nonetheless, the work of bringing board and staff together to educate the boards on the merits of casework consumed a good deal of energy on the part of the FWAA. Many of the articles in the organization's newsletter *Highlights* (which was directed at board members) carried suggestions for bridging the gap between board and staff. Most focused on using practical examples of how case work addressed client problems to help illustrate to board members the usefulness of case work.²⁸¹ Ralph Uihlein warned of an "element of danger if staff participation is carried to an excess," if boards were overwhelmed rather than educated by the technical expertise of the staff.²⁸² Ethelda Mullen of the Family Society of Wilmington struggled continually to put her work into terms that her business-oriented board would recognize. In 1940 she broke down their contacts with clients into numerous sub-categories, ranging from "strengthening family relationships" (which included "releasing feelings and tensions, working out adjustment for living arrangements, developing understanding of children's behavior, interpreting legal proceedings") to "making use of economic resources in the community", "helping with medical treatment," and "personality factors affecting employment." In 1943, she

²⁸¹Harriet Parsons, "The Board Meeting," *Highlights* (January, 1944): 132-134; Frances Gendral, "Teamwork Between Board and Staff," *Highlights* (June, 1944): p. 57-61; Mrs. George W. Brown, "A Board Member Institute Pays Dividends," *Highlights* (December, 1944): 119-121.

²⁸²Uihlein, "Joint Responsibilities," p. 69.

broke them down into three broad categories, “Emergency needs,” “Environmental needs” (i.e., housing, child care, job issues), and “Relationship needs.”²⁸³ Exasperated, in 1944, she said, “Any attempt to evaluate service directly to the problem of personal relationships in terms of statistics would have little meaning.” She went on to add,

We do know that the opportunity for release of emotion was used by two hundred sixty five individuals, that problems were clarified for two hundred and eighty-eight, and that one hundred and eighty-eight persons were helped to discover and use their own strengths in the modification of their difficulties.²⁸⁴

The minutes of this board meeting note no reaction to Mullen’s presentation.

By the end of the war, private casework agencies had become fundamentally oriented toward an approach of “helping” a broader array of people than the economically deprived who had been their client base prior to and during the Depression. While social service did not imply a rejection of their charitable mission or concern with the poor, it certainly attenuated it. The war finally forced all such casework agencies to consider the integrity of their services and their applicability to other problems. While their initial attempts to capitalize on wartime phenomena such as the Selective Service or the revived interest in industrial counseling did not generate the pools of clients they had hoped, the preoccupation with such programs helped condition such agencies to consider similar efforts, such as more generalized family and marital counseling. The legitimacy granted therapeutic approaches to “normal” people through military psychology would bolster the case that private case work agencies made that their services might well be a useful to similar groups.

²⁸³Directors, FSW, October 29, 1940; FSD Executive Director’s Annual Report, October 19, 1943.

²⁸⁴E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 24, 1944.

Private case work agencies were granted the institutional space to explore such options by a general shift in public mood toward voluntary effort, also a product of the war, and the continuing commitment of their boards to private social action. While the end of World War Two did not see the rollback of government authority that had followed World War One, high profile voluntary efforts such as the USO did bolster the tarnished image that dogged voluntarism after its breakdown during the Depression. The political reaction against such wartime entities as the Office of Price Administration helped condition a general reaction against widespread government intervention, a reaction that inevitably made the climate for favorable for private organizations of many stripes. Moreover, the boards of directors who oversaw private casework agencies generally came from a tradition that valued, if not favored, the action of private citizens and organizations in addressing social problems. These attitudes gave the professional staff enough time and flexibility to reorient agency programs along the lines that would capitalize on their skills, even if they had not proved the popularity or efficacy of those skills.

The New Crisis of Voluntarism?

As the war drew to a close, it became clear to the staff at the Family Society of Wilmington that their halting efforts to distinguish themselves as an institution that offered “service” rather than relief had only had limited success. Applicants coming in on their own accord had dropped since the beginning of the war, constituting only a third of clients. As the wartime economy slowed, the agency saw an increase in relief, with 67 percent of the applications in 1945 were for financial assistance, with an increase in

particular from black clients. Mullen pointed to the meager welfare infrastructure in Delaware as the chief culprit. The state lacked a general relief program outside of the federally supported welfare categories, and she pointed out that due to lack of resources, “the private family case work agency is not set up to do a coverage job.” Welfare remained a distinct part of the agency’s image. At the same time, Mullen noted, 319 of the 410 clients had supposedly made use of the social worker’s help with “release of emotion,” to “clarify his problems,” and to “discover and utilize his own strengths.”²⁸⁵ To promote these services, and to try to further disassociate themselves from relief, the Society would change its name in 1946 to Family Service of Wilmington.

With clients voting with their feet during World War Two, and with the leadership of the FWAA and other social case work activists pressing agencies to seek out new areas of service, voluntary family agencies began the difficult transition from giving alms to giving service. A cursory look at any individual agency during the period would reveal few dramatic changes; as Mullen said of her agency’s work during the war, many of the problems they saw were similar to ones of years past, some were “new and different,” and others “were old problems in new settings.” But shifting from relief to service (even if many of the services were essentially welfare) and from an exclusive association with the poor was clearly the path that most agencies realized they needed to follow.

Their experimental programs during the war, particularly in conjunction with public authority, demonstrate that the early 1940s was a critical, transitional period for the balance between local public and voluntary institutions. Whereas in the early and

²⁸⁵ E.D. Report, FSW, Oct. 15, 1945.

mid-1930s, the rapid expansion of federal public welfare often necessitated the use of private agency structures and personnel to help build the new welfare state, in the expanding wartime state voluntary agencies found themselves in a more ambiguous position. There remained situations where their expertise could be traded for access to clients, particularly in the variety of services family agencies conducted for the Selective Service. But the intensive nature of voluntary agency work, their limited geographic range, and the need for rapid processing of army inductees, eventually led local boards to turn to the resources of public welfare and health agencies for screening and investigation. Public agencies were now better established and could conduct rudimentary tasks without the professional social workers of voluntary agencies. Moreover, private agencies were now more wary of a direct connection with state authority, realizing that in fact it could reinforce the associations between family service and welfare.

Negotiating between their board's support for voluntarism, and their board's more traditional expectations of what a local charity would do, private family agencies moved gingerly toward offering their professional ability as counselors as their agency's gift to their clients. But even the act of giving came under question, as some agencies moved to charge fees in order to strip their services of their charitable overtones. The tension between service as a gift and service as a commodity was at the heart of private agencies' efforts to redefine themselves.

This redefinition was aided by the fact that public institutions, by and large, did not move into the provision of professional casework or counseling in association with welfare programs. The possibility that government relief agencies might move to become

broader service agencies, and crowd out voluntary institutions, haunted private workers during the Depression and World War Two, and it preoccupied many activists in the public sector. The following chapter will examine the relationship between public welfare and private casework during the wartime period. It will argue that part of the continued vitality of the private sector after the Depression was the default and defeat of public casework activists to secure support for their efforts. But the vitality this granted the private sector also contributed to the ambiguous responsibility that private agencies were expected to exercise toward the poor.

CHAPTER THREE: CASEWORK, VOLUNTARISM, AND THE WARTIME WELFARE STATE

Introduction

In a series of meetings in 1941 at the Federal Security Agency in Washington, D.C., headquarters of the American public welfare state, public and private social work leaders glumly evaluated the prospects of mobilizing the country to equate civil defense and social welfare. Helen Jeter of the Bureau of Public Assistance noted that regional defense councils were paying “no attention to family security. They are paying so much attention to mechanical things, like sewers.” Governors, another public official added, “are still thinking largely in terms of anti-aircraft and firefighting, so they don’t seem to be getting awfully far on [the needs of families].” Linton Swift of the Family Welfare Association of America groused that the focus of public and private agencies on providing recreation for soldiers and workers missed the point: “I wonder how many of the new industrial workers who are in one of these industrial communities think that their terrible need is recreation.” And finally, Harry Lurie of the Council of Jewish Welfare Federations and Welfare Funds observed “there doesn’t as yet seem to be an incentive on the part of the communities or agencies to organize to meet the problems even with the additional patriotic incentive which is present.”²⁸⁶

These laments over the welfare consciousness of wartime America demonstrate the consensus between private and public social agencies as the Depression drew to a close. Both operated in a world where wide areas of need still went unmet by any sort of

²⁸⁶ Minutes April 21, 1941, Subcommittee on Financial Assistance, Family Security Committee, Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services, Folder 1, Box 2; Minutes, June 16, 1941, FSC Subcommittee on Community Organization, Box 2; Minutes, September 8, 1941, FSC Subcommittee on Information Services, Box 2, all in Entry 59, RG 215 (Office of Community War Services), National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

organized social agency, public or private. Professionals on both sides of the public/private divide resented the small-mindedness and lack of foresight of local public officials for not prioritizing the needs of families as an aspect of defense readiness. As shown in the previous chapter, all were convinced that the war would pose threats to the fundamental stability of the family. And, given their common professional bonds, all were convinced that offering tangible services, such as health care for the families of soldiers, in combination with the intangible aid of a professional social worker, was the correct strategy.

This area of consensus was also the arena for competition between public and private. As much as private family agencies had hoped that the war would offer new opportunities to serve, public welfare professionals viewed the war as a chance to equate national defense with economic security, and to further elaborate the public welfare system of the 1930s. One aspect of their robust vision of the American welfare state was the widespread employment of professional social workers who could offer the same sort of “adjustment” that private agencies were rapidly turning to. World War Two appeared to be another potential turning point in the relationship between the voluntary sector and public welfare. Even though voluntary agencies had proved crucial to the implementation of federal welfare policy in the 1930s, the pendulum had begun to swing in favor of the public sector. To professional social workers who led public assistance agencies, or whose teaching was directed toward the public sector, the war offered a chance to move closer to fully appropriating the functions of “service” from voluntary family agencies that they had marginalized in the field of monetary relief.

Most historians have glossed over the ferocity of the debate between professionals in the voluntary sector and the public sector in the 1940s, relegating most disputes between private and public social welfare to the early years of the Depression. Even those who have examined the profession of social work itself have largely seen a natural and fairly smooth divergence of the voluntary and public sectors into areas of functional differentiation: public welfare handled the routine administration of financial assistance, and voluntary agencies focused on highly professionalized and individualized services, particularly quasi-therapeutic counseling.²⁸⁷ However, during World War Two this process remained highly contested. As shown in the previous chapter, many voluntary agencies clung to their relief-giving practices, and were unsure about their abilities to offer professional counseling. Conversely, many professionals in the public sector saw nothing natural about such a division of labor. The momentum of state expansion in the late 1930s convinced them that, in fact, the next area of welfare expansion would be in the very social services that voluntary agencies were developing. With relief from the crushing numbers of clients driven by Depression need, public agencies would have the time to devote as much attention to their clients as voluntary agencies could.

The ambition to extend public welfare to include social casework “services” prompted a sharp debate among professional social workers. At one level, the debate examined the potential for professionalism within public institutions: whether the rules that governed welfare structures were at odds with the independence of judgment that seemed to be at the heart of professionalism. It was also, though a debate about a

²⁸⁷Stanley Wenocur and Michael Reisch, *From Charity to Enterprise: The Development of American Social Work in a Market Economy* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989): 216-218.

particular kind of professional, a “helper” whose skills were largely unquantifiable.

This discussion encompassed not the merits of casework, largely agreed upon within these circles, but where it should be rightly lodged: if there were distinctive characteristics about the ways in which voluntary and public institutions helped people that made one or the other a more effective sponsor of casework.

Those associated with the voluntary sector questioned the wisdom of infusing public welfare with counseling-oriented casework. They argued that the bureaucratic limitations of public welfare precluded the “creative helpfulness” that defined casework. Voluntary agencies (and some veterans of public welfare) questioned if it was possible to be a professional social worker, attentive to the individual needs of clients, in an “impersonal” bureaucratic welfare administration. Public welfare advocates during World War Two countered by arguing for the capacity of the public sector to match the quality and surpass the scope of private agencies—if given the resources—and questioned any inherent advantages of private over public. Though the arena of conflict among social workers was the relatively narrow subject of casework, it rehearsed wider public debates that would re-emerge in the late twentieth century, where advocates of religious charities argued for the advantages of social service with a distinctively religious quality.²⁸⁸

But attempts to use the war to gather public sentiment behind a more robust welfare state—that included public social casework services—faltered. Across a range of areas of social policy, “defense” proved not a powerful enough rationale to justify the construction of the type of welfare state envisioned by many liberals. As Roosevelt

²⁸⁸ Amy Sherman, “Cross-Purposes: Will Conservative Welfare Reform Corrupt Religious Charities?” *Policy Review* (Fall 1995): 58-63; Mark Chaves and William Tsitsos, “Congregations and Social Services: What They Do, How They Do It, and With Whom,” *Nonprofit Sector and Voluntary Quarterly* (Dec. 2001): 660-683.

morphed from Dr. New Deal to Dr. Win-the-War, the political momentum for expanding the type of programs within the social safety net faded. The war halted what many welfare state advocates assumed would be an expansion of a variety of economic and health security measures, leaving large areas of need that continued to be addressed, if at all, by a variety of private institutions and organizations.²⁸⁹

One of the lessons of this chapter's examination of voluntary-state relationships during World War Two is the complex legacy of wartime state building. There is strong evidence of the desire of professionals within public welfare administration to use the war to displace private family agencies. Their failure to do so created the basis for the justification of the division of labor between public welfare and voluntary service that became reified after the war. But the success of voluntary agencies in cornering a market on "intangible" social services such as counseling was not merely a result of "state failure". In some areas of social action, the war restored the prestige of a voluntary sector tarnished by its failures during the Depression. This was certainly not a uniform trend across all arenas of the political economy. As some scholars argue, the wartime experience demonstrated an increased comfort by many Americans with government institutions and regulation, even in non-military spheres.²⁹⁰ But the expansion of the state,

²⁸⁹ Bartholomew Sparrow, *From the Outside In: World War II and the American State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Edwin Amenta, *Bold Relief: Institutional Politics and the Origins of Modern American Social Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 191-230.

²⁹⁰ The dramatic and largely permanent expansion of the size of the federal government during World War Two is demonstrated in Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), p. 279-285; arguments for the softening of anti-statism can be found in Meg Jacobs, "How about some meat?": The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-46," *Journal of American History* (Dec. 1997): 910-942; Robert G. Spinney, *World War Two in Nashville: Transformation of the Home Front* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998). Roger W. Lohtin in "The Illusion of Transformation," (H-Urban, August, 2000), contests the argument that anti-statism was eroded by the war, and Aaron Friedberg argues for the pervasive impact of anti-statism on Cold

particularly under wartime conditions, also stimulated the expansion of voluntarism.

The high-visibility role of the Red Cross and the United Service Organizations, which channeled private effort into meeting the recreational and social needs of servicemen, gave voluntarism in general a glow of viability which it had lost in the 1930s.

Voluntarism enjoyed more than the penumbra of good feelings that surrounded war relief; wartime fundraising expanded the capacities of pre-war charities as well. On closer examination, it is clear that the successes of wartime voluntarism were actually intimately tied to the expansion of the state during the war, and public institutions and organizations helped legitimize and support voluntary efforts. Nonetheless, by war's end, chastened New Dealers and a resurgent voluntary sector viewed a mixed public-private social welfare system that few would have predicted on the eve of the war.

Family Security and Wartime Problems

In a speech to a receptive audience at the Family Welfare Association of America's biennial gathering in early 1942, Helen Jeter, Chief of Public Assistance Statistics at the Social Security Board, said, "if we really believe that family and home are the foundation of democratic life, then their protection is one of the objectives for which we are involved in a world war, and their preservation is a strength to our fighting and producing forces."²⁹¹ Jeter spoke as secretary to the Family Security Committee (FSC), created in early 1941 as an advisory committee to Paul McNutt, "Coordinator of Health, Welfare and Related Activities Affecting National Defense" in addition to his

War statebuilding; see Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

²⁹¹Helen Jeter, "Wartime Problems of Family Security," *The Family* (May, 1942): 83.

responsibilities as head of the Federal Security Agency. The FSC's initial charge was to pool the knowledge of private and public welfare agencies in anticipation of the problems of "family security" that might arise from wartime conditions. Jane Hoey, head of the Social Security Board's Bureau of Public Assistance, and chair of the FSC stated privately to the committee that the "conservation of normal family life" should be a major goal of the committee, to prevent family problems from undermining the self-sufficiency of workers.²⁹²

Encouraging self-sufficiency was the historic charge of American social work. World War Two offered a chance to link that effort with broader patriotic themes. Social workers had long seen financial independence as psychologically beneficial. "It is the cornerstone," said Mary W. Glenn, the president of the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work (the predecessor of the FWAA) in 1927, "because there lies at stake the liberty of the individual to maintain his identity, to develop his innate qualities, in other words to be a personality."²⁹³

These convictions seemed even more salient during a war against fascism. To Ruth Mann, a district supervisor of the Jewish Social Service Association of New York City, the impulse in wartime to deal with people *en masse* threatened both democratic principles as well as the therapeutic techniques. She asked if, during the war, "casework with the individual is as out of place as a champagne cocktail in a cafeteria." Predictably,

²⁹²Family Security Committee, Subcommittee on Information Services Minutes, March 26, 1941, Box 2, Entry 59, RG 215. The Coordinator's office was given formal status under an executive order in September 1941 that created the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services within the Office of Emergency Management in the Executive Office of the President. Charles Taft—a Cincinnati lawyer, brother of Senator Robert Taft, and prominent voluntary sector fundraiser—was asked to head the ODHWS.

²⁹³Mary W. Glenn, "The Family Welfare Movement in America," in Margaret E. Rich, ed., *Family Life Today* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1927): 229.

she answered “no.” As compared to Fascist countries, she argued, “we have the immeasurable good fortune of being Americans who are privileged to serve a state that has space in its fundamental structure and philosophy to embody all that seems good to us both as caseworkers and as Americans.” A concern with the individual linked casework and democracy, continued Mann, and if the U.S. was to win the war, “we cannot park our respect for the individual along with cars and silk stockings for the duration.” Ethelda Mullen, executive secretary of the Family Society of Delaware, drew on similar rhetoric in her annual reports to her board of directors during the war: “Family casework has its place in the task of preserving for America the way of life which will insure to every individual his rights in a ‘finer, more socially responsible democracy than we have known in the past.’”²⁹⁴

The family moved into equal prominence with the individual in the wartime rhetoric of caseworkers. The 1940 White House Conference on Children and Democracy asserted that the family was the “first school in democratic life,” and that in order to ensure that children acquire the “virtues of ‘self-sufficiency, enterprise, initiative, and intelligent obedience,’” that parental education efforts be increased and that society step in with social services when parents and family could not afford children “adequate care and protection.” The editors of *The Family* wrote that the basic responsibility of social workers during the war was to preserve the operation of their agencies, arguing, “Our everyday job of helping people is important in our democratic way of life.” Such help included efforts to encourage the attitudes and experiences that social workers thought were essential to democracy. Guaranteeing a person’s economic security was vital, said

²⁹⁴Ruth Z. S. Mann, “The War and Casework,” *The Family* (March, 1943): 3-8; Executive Director’s Annual Report, Family Society of Delaware, October 27, 1942.

Mullen, but equally so was developing “that emotional satisfaction which establishes his belief in democracy.”²⁹⁵ The speed with which “democracy” was employed, and the overlapping definitions drew a jaundiced eye even from observers within social work circles. One of Gertrude Springer’s characters in her “Miss Bailey” column in the *Survey Midmonthly* noted “she’s a little fed up with all the high-sounding talk about social work and democracy and wants to see a little more practice on the job.”²⁹⁶

The Family Security Committee allowed public and private case welfare activists a forum in which to develop these sentiments and to strategize on how to use the war to implement more extensive programs of economic and psychological security. It was one of a cluster of similar committees that advised McNutt’s office, including “social protection” (against prostitution and venereal disease) and recreation, constant worries for those preoccupied by the consequences of amassing new concentrations of soldiers and war workers in unprepared communities. The committee was a who’s who of national leaders of public and private social work. Private agency representatives included Robert Bondy of the American Red Cross, Bradley Buell of the Community Chests and Councils, David Holbrook of the National Social Work Council, Harry Lurie of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, Bertha McCall of the National Traveler’s Aid Association, Msgr. John O’Grady of the National Conference of Catholic

²⁹⁵“The Home Front,” *The Family* (January, 1942): 322-323; Executive Director’s Annual Report, Family Society of Delaware, October 19, 1943; James S. Plant, “The Family as Threshold of Democracy (Points Suggested for Discussion at Group Meeting),” White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, Jan. 18, 1940; Beulah Amidon, “The Conference Finds and Recommends,” *Survey Midmonthly* (February, 1940): 55. The links between family stability, psychological health, and democracy signaled an early sign of the postwar interest in the psychological basis of democracy by the Frankfurt School, and the research by behavioral scientists on family and child-rearing patterns that would ultimately produce the “culture of poverty” analysis. See Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 102-107.

²⁹⁶Gertrude Springer, “Miss Bailey Goes Visiting: ‘Even if it Gets Rough,’” *Survey Midmonthly* (December, 1940): 357.

Charities and Linton Swift of the FWAA. But the FSC was a creature of the federal public welfare establishment, particularly the Bureau of Public Assistance. The Committee was filled out with representatives from the Work Projects Administration, the National Youth Administration, the Department of Labor, and various arms of the Social Security Board.²⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the voluntary and public administrators had traveled similar social work circles in the 1920s and 1930s, and the voluntary sector had in fact contributed some of the BPA's top executives; Swift saw Jeter in particular as "broadly appreciative of activities in our field."²⁹⁸

The FSC, though ultimately granted no operational authority, is a convenient place to determine how voluntary sector and public sector welfare professionals on the national level assessed their mutual capacities at the waning of the Depression and on the eve of war. Most striking is the near-consensus on the necessity of a basic public social safety net. Swift and other private agency representatives were more or less in accord with the use of the FSC to lobby for expanding the public welfare apparatus that had been created in the past decade. Swift chaired a subcommittee that reported back to the FSC that "the basic financial provision is Government, and it should be," adding that any new wartime expenditures should be made through existing public welfare agencies. There were few debates over the need for more and better public welfare. Rather, much energy was spent arguing about the need to channel wartime money through established

²⁹⁷FSC Minutes, February 27, 1941, Box 1, Entry 59; Helen Jeter, "Summary of Progress," September 8, 1941, CBSM Folder 3, Box 1, Entry 60; "Members of the Family Security Committee," FSC General Material, Box 2, Entry 60, all in RG 215, N.A.

²⁹⁸ Geoffrey May of the Bureau of Public Assistance (and a member of the FSC) had been an executive at the private Family Service Society in Richmond, Virginia in the early 1930s; Jeter had directed the Research Bureau for the private Welfare Council of New York City. Swift to B. Ethelda Mullen, Sept. 29, 1941, Folder "Wilmington, DE, 1940-45," Box 44, Family Service Association of America Records; McKinley and Frase, p. 499.

institutions. The emphasis on use of existing agencies, both public and private, indicated both the policy and institutional concerns of FSC committee members. The alternative they sought to forestall was the creation of temporary agencies—both governmental and voluntary—that would wither away at the end of the war, and serve little purpose in building a more complete welfare system.²⁹⁹ An obvious material benefit would also accrue to older welfare agencies should they become the conduits for wartime welfare expenditures.

Using the FSC as a lobbying organ proved fruitless. One of the chief hopes of most of the committee, both private and public, is that the FSC could capitalize on the war emergency to promote one of the items on the agenda of the Bureau of Public Assistance: a federalized system of general assistance. By providing a federal system, as well as working on laws that eliminated state residency requirements, welfare advocates hoped to plug a major gap in the New Deal public assistance program, which made no federal allowance for needy families outside of those headed by single mothers. It also would address the issue of needy transients, which the committee expected would be a significant problem as the population began to shift in search of war production jobs. Swift and others concurred, with the notable exception of Msgr. John O'Grady, head of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, who opposed grants-in-aid and preferred expansion of work relief instead.³⁰⁰ However, after the FSC reported its recommendations to McNutt's office, Helen Jeter reported back in late 1941 that "there is a general feeling

²⁹⁹FWAA Blue Bulletin No. 4 (January 6, 1941), in Selective Service Folder 3, Box 3, Entry 60, RG 215. The Blue Bulletins were published by the FWAA for member agencies as a compendium of defense-related news, particularly government regulations, on social welfare issues. Rich, *Belief in People*, p. 144. FSC Minutes, September 9, 1941, Box 1, Entry 59, RG 215.

³⁰⁰FSC Minutes, September 9, 1941.

now that we can't press, any of us, for legislation in that form, and, therefore, although there is still need it is difficult now to make that need felt in Congress." Hoey remained confident that other programs could be expanded to cover the needs of families during the war, and beyond, by extending ADC to children deprived of parental support for any reason, extending aid to the blind to cover all handicapped, and allow the WPA to care for any childless individuals. However, she urged Swift to have his local private agencies try to apply pressure for the idea of federal general relief.³⁰¹

That the war did not offer a guaranteed route for expanding domestic social programs became apparent even during 1941, when the Family Security Committee began to investigate the possibility of linking welfare programs to civilian defense. As the committee began trying to figure out how to gather information on potential problems, Elizabeth Wickenden, then a staff member on the Social Security Board, complained that welfare was the "poorest covered" of the fields that the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services dealt with. The Executive Committee of the FWAA worried also that the office would emphasize recreation, and "may create some real problems for family welfare and other agencies not included."³⁰² The low priority of welfare was not only a problem at the federal level. State and local civil defense organizations showed little inclination to plan ahead for possible social disruptions surrounding defense and war. Civil defense was interpreted on the local level as a response to disaster or invasion, not

³⁰¹FSC Subcommittee on Community Organization, Minutes, June 16, 1941, Box 2, Entry 59, RG 215; FSC Minutes, December 19, 1941, Box 1, Entry 59, RG 215. National general assistance would, in fact, be proposed repeatedly in the late war in versions of the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bills and legislation submitted by Congressman Aime Forand of Rhode Island.

³⁰²FSC Subcommittee on Information Services, Minutes, March 26, 1941; FSC Subcommittee on Financial Assistance, Minutes, April 2, 1941, Folder 1; both Box 2, E. 59, RG 215; FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, February 14, 1941, Folder 1, Box 7, Family Service Association of America Records, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota.

to the socio-economic upheavals that might accompany mobilization. As one field worker observed, "councils are more interested in spectacular and unusual aspects of the defense program than the everyday problems of a civilian population in a country at war...."³⁰³ Welfare lacked the immediacy of a perceived threat, and the rising tide of "patriotic incentive" did not bring family security closer to the total program welfare advocates had hoped for.

Similar efforts by other liberal policymakers came to naught. Eleanor Roosevelt saw civilian defense as an opportunity to promote "progressive social legislation as part of national defense." She attempted to do so by running the Volunteer Participation Committee of Office of Civilian Defense, a wartime agency headed by New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, and hoping to channel wartime voluntarism into a stronger sense of shared national purpose that would extend to social welfare. However, her prominence as a liberal attracted attacks from conservative legislators who felt, like Representative Eugene Cox of Georgia, that "advantage is being taken of the emergency to further socialize America." Roosevelt resigned and the social welfare aspects of the OCD were denuded.³⁰⁴

Still, voluntary agencies were worried about being sidelined by expanding public institutions during the war. Elizabeth Wickenden reported that the private social work agencies she had talked to were "extremely anxious to come into the picture and we have not had many specific things to ask them to do."³⁰⁵ As Bradley Buell of the national Community Chests and Councils, Inc. observed, the communities with well-organized

³⁰³ "Progress of Regional Family Security Committees," April 7 1942, Regional FSC Folder 1, Box 1, E. 60, RG 215.

³⁰⁴ Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), p. 634-653.

³⁰⁵ "Progress of Regional Family Security Committees."

private agencies tended to be middle-sized or larger cities that were not facing emergencies during mobilization, since they were usually not the locations of camps or new war industries.³⁰⁶ The FWAA reached out to the welfare leadership by inviting Hoey in 1942 to serve as a member of their board of directors, stating that “the lack of membership on the Board of people who have public welfare knowledge and a range of vision which you possess, has been sorely felt in the past.” Swift added a personal letter to the invitation, observing the “increasingly close relationship between the Association and the Public Assistance Bureau.”³⁰⁷ Hoey declined, citing the press of war related work.

But the pendulum toward the public sector had not swung all the way. Public welfare field staff, gathering information on wartime welfare needs, revealed the persistence and importance of private welfare during the war. Anne Geddes of the BPA noted that in a place like Louisville, Kentucky, which had a long residency requirement for welfare eligibility, private agencies helped many newcomers; “therefore to get information from the private agencies is going to be extremely important for any understanding either of what goes on or how the public assistance provisions need to be extended.”³⁰⁸ During research for a BPA survey on the effect of the war on dependent families, Lucille Corbett wrote from Akron, Ohio, back to Rose McHugh, chief of the BPA’s Division of Administrative Surveys that they had been trying to get a sense of how the public assistance program fit into “the general scheme of things and what other agency attitudes are towards it,” and included a conference with the case supervisor of the private Family Service Society in her research. At the very least, private welfare

³⁰⁶FSC Subcommittee on Community Organization, Minutes, June 16, 1941, Box 2, Entry 59, RG 215.

³⁰⁷Donald Nelson to Jane Hoey, April 14, 1942; Linton Swift to Jane Hoey, April 16, 1942, both in “FWAA, 1941-42,” Box 142, Bureau of Public Assistance, “Correspondence,” RG 47, N.A.

³⁰⁸FSC Subcommittee on Information Services, Minutes, March 19, 1942, Box 2, Entry 59, RG 215.

agencies were well acquainted with the gaps in public services, as they were often where people turned if they fell through the cracks of public programs.

Conservative administration of public assistance by local officials helped create some of these cracks. Eveline Burns had observed to the NCSW in 1941 “small governmental units responsible for those who do not fit [federal programs] have been unable or unwilling to cooperate;” while local social services had been developed in some areas, “they have been developed only for the actual relief population and the area of human need is much broader than that.”³⁰⁹ An early draft by the Family Security Committee of a circular on “Bases of Wartime Cooperation for Family Security Services, Governmental and Voluntary,” noted while the primary responsibility for family security was governmental, voluntary organizations must step in “where Government fails to provide the necessary leadership.” However, this was later modified to private agencies addressing “areas of unmet need.”³¹⁰

Filling the gaps of public welfare would continue to be a facet of voluntary sector-state relationships in the ensuing decades. But voluntarism in general enjoyed a much wider revival during the war. Voluntary fundraising and voluntary action, particularly for foreign relief and for the needs of soldiers, mobilized Americans to give money and time

³⁰⁹Gertrude Springer and Kathryn Close, “Priorities on the Social Front,” *Survey Midmonthly* (July, 1941): 211.

³¹⁰“Bases of Wartime Cooperation for Family Security Services, Governmental and Voluntary,” January 5, 1942; same title, Family Security Circular No. 5, February 19, 1942, in CBSM. Folder 2, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215. Many communities continued to lack private resources or organization. Corbett noted in Portsmouth, Ohio, that the private agency was defunct, and that the public agency was in poor shape as well. A report from Charleston, South Carolina, complained that while there were 34 agencies on the books as working in the welfare field, including seven casework organizations, services were actually at an all-time low and there was “very little understanding of the possible functions of a private agency.” Lucille Corbett to Rose McHugh, January 15, 1943; Corbett to McHugh, January 19, 1943, Folder 064.2, Box 180, BPA Correspondence, 1935-48, RG 47. *Family Security Confidential Bulletin* No. 26 (May 8, 1942), CBSM. Folder 2.

at extraordinary levels. The financial and personal involvement of so many citizens, and the media coverage of voluntarism in general, gave a glow to voluntary institutions that had fallen into the shadows of the New Deal welfare state.

Voluntarism was revived with the aid of the wartime state. Voluntary effort was shaped, regulated, and often supported by public efforts. Federal commissions certified and helped rationalize wartime fundraising; military institutions granted monopolies to certain charities; and federal money underwrote the physical infrastructure used by voluntary organizations. The degree to which wartime voluntarism was built upon the state, and that wartime state expansion fueled rather than retarded the voluntary sector, tends to be obscured in the celebratory accounts from contemporary sources.³¹¹

The single most active and visible charity during the war was the American Red Cross. The Red Cross was a somewhat unique charity, though, given a special charter by Congress and with a specific mission aimed at the relief of uniformed personnel (as well as disasters). During World War One, the Red Cross emerged as an integrated national network that included work with the families of soldiers at home—much to the chagrin of local Associated Charities, who considered such families their province. The Red Cross backed away from its “home service” program after World War One. After its refusal to take responsibility for federal funds during the early 1930s, the Red Cross’s prominence

³¹¹L. F. Kimball, *The USO: Five Years of Service* (New York: United Service Organizations, 1946). The intertwining of public and private power in defense mobilization during World War Two had precedents in a variety of different arenas of policy during World War One; see Robert Cuff, *The War Industries Board: Business-Government Relations During World War One* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). For a recent examination of voluntary “vigilance” committees operating in quasi-police capacities during World War One, see Christopher Capazzola, “The Only Badge You Need is Your Patriotic Fervor: Vigilance, Coercion, and the Law in World War I America,” *Journal of American History* (Mar. 2002): 1354-1382.

receded further, though it conducted several successful fundraisers for natural disasters even during the depth of the Depression.³¹²

World War Two presented a new opportunity for the Red Cross. Its mission to the military had shifted. The hospital and ambulance services it provided during World War One had been taken over by the military. But the Red Cross moved quickly to secure a monopoly on services to military men in the field—a mission claimed by a number of agencies during World War One, including the YMCA, the Salvation Army, and several religious groups. In 1939, the War Department granted the Red Cross exclusivity for World War Two. The Red Cross was bolstered by other public assistance. The President's War Relief Control Board forbade any other national agency from conducting fundraising campaigns during the Red Cross's annual spring fund drive. Similarly, the Red Cross, in publicizing its work and preparing for its annual drives, enjoyed the "full publicity resources of the Office of War Information." In preparation for the 1943 drive, for example, the Red Cross, with the assistance of the OWI, arranged for 40 feature articles or editorials in national magazines, and was the cover story for ten; placed thousands of newspaper stories, placed newsreels in movie theatres, and arranged nearly 60,000 local radio broadcasts. "It would have been a rare hermit indeed who escaped the bombardment of pleas to give," said a later historian.³¹³

³¹² Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 189-192; Robert D. Cuff, "Herbert Hoover, The Ideology of Voluntarism and War Organization During the Great War," *Journal of American History* 64 (1977): 358-372; Ellis W. Hawley, "Herbert Hoover, the Commerce Secretariat, and the Vision of an 'Associative State,' 1921-1928," *Journal of American History* 61 (1977): 116-140; Nan E. Woodruff, *As Rare As Rain: Federal Relief in the Great Southern Drought of 1930-1931* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 41; Scott M. Cutlip, *Fund Raising in the United States: Its Role in American Philanthropy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1965), p. 299-302; Foster Rhea Dulles, *The American Red Cross: A History* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 280-285.

³¹³ Cutlip, 413-422; Dulles, p. 352.

The United Service Organizations also bolstered the image of wartime voluntarism. As the U.S. armed forces began to build up in 1940, several agencies that had served servicemen during World War One, including the YMCA, the YWCA, the National Catholic Community Service, the Salvation Army and the Jewish Welfare Board formed a loose association to divert soldiers from “boredom and sinful temptations” with “wholesome recreation.”³¹⁴ That organization, the National United Welfare Board, added the National Travelers Aid Association and reorganized as a corporation in 1941, the United Service Organizations for National Defense, Inc. While most contemporary accounts nostalgically recall the activities of volunteer hostesses providing recreation for servicemen, the USO was in fact a part of a deeply public-private effort to meet the recreational needs of servicemen. Aside from activities sponsored by the military itself, the Work Projects Administration also built and ran hundreds of recreational centers for soldiers until the WPA was shut down in 1943.³¹⁵ Roosevelt issued a declaration of support for the new organization on April 8, 1941, and pushed for an appropriation of \$150 million under the Lanham Act to build over 300 recreation centers for USO organizations to run their operation in. Moreover, federal agencies drew lines of demarcation between the activities of the Red Cross and the USO. The Red Cross dealt with nearly all the overseas work, with the very visible exception of the USO Camp Shows; the USO primarily focused on recreational opportunities in towns near domestic military facilities, as well as providing rest stations in local communities for soldiers in

³¹⁴ Cutlip, p. 398.

³¹⁵ “The War Recreation Services of Several Federal and National Agencies,” *Recreation* (June 1943): 132-138, 185; Patrick O’Brien, “Kansas at War, Part 3: At Ease,” *Kansas History* (Spring 1994): 6-25.

transit.³¹⁶ Nonetheless, due to the number of volunteers USO operations drew on in local communities and the large number of servicemen they interacted with, the voluntary side of the USO was the most visible public aspect of its work. The organization's report described it as "essentially a volunteer organization," downplaying both the government support and the core of professional workers who ran the organization.³¹⁷

Foreign relief appeals constituted another highly visible aspect of wartime philanthropy. As the hostilities in Europe escalated during the late 1930s and civilian populations began to be displaced by fighting, sympathetic supporters and European immigrants in the United States began to form relief organizations to send aid to Europe. Under the Neutrality Act of 1939, which prohibited economic activity in countries involved in fighting, voluntary relief agencies that sent money to such countries were required to register with the State Department. As the fighting spread in Europe during 1940, relief organizations proliferated into the hundreds, with dozens of charities often operating for the relief of the same country. In 1941, for example, over 70 charities were seeking funds for the relief of Britain (though over half of the funds were raised by only two groups). Solicitations from such groups competed with each other, as well as with the fundraising efforts of domestic charities. Protest from local charities facing competition, and from local businessmen facing confusing and conflicting solicitation spurred President Roosevelt to appoint a Committee on War Relief Activities to study the

³¹⁶ Cutlip, 398-402; Julia M. H. Cason, *Home Away From Home: The Story of the U.S.O.* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1946).

³¹⁷ See Kimball. Some examples of the reach of the USO and nostalgia for it include "Memories: Walnut Street USO, Rockford, Illinois," (Rockford, Ill.: The USO, 1944); "Memories of the USO Recreation Center, Norfolk, Virginia, 1942-1947," (1957); "Memories of the Hartford USO Club, 1941-1946," (Hartford, Ct.: The Club, 1946); June Hastings, "USO in Skagway, Alaska, 1943-1944" (1993); Everard Smith, *Victory on the Home Front: The USO in New Hanover County, North Carolina, 1941-1946* (Wilmington, NC: 1999).

problem in early 1941. While voluntary efforts to reduce duplication had some effect, the entry of the U.S. into the war late that year birthed another round of relief measures, many aimed at U.S. servicemen; as one fundraiser put it later, “the situation was just about as in hand as a greased pig at a midnight picnic.”³¹⁸

Again, charity asked government to organize the voluntary sector. National leaders of the Community Chest movement, headed by Winthrop Aldrich, chairman of the board of Chase Manhattan Bank and brother-in-law of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., met in Cincinnati that summer and requested stronger action from the federal government to rationalize the charitable market. Roosevelt responded with an executive order that created the War Relief Control Board, empowered to regulate the timing and nature of any war-related fundraising appeals, to order the merging of agencies, and to audit the records of war relief organizations. That fall, Charles P. Taft of the Board recommended that war fund drives be limited to two: one for the Red Cross, and one for all other war agencies, including the USO. Taft, a Republican attorney from Cincinnati, son of William Howard Taft and the more progressive brother of Senator Robert Taft, had the ear of the private fundraising community, having served as the chairman of the national Community Chest’s national “Mobilization for Human Needs” campaigns from 1937 to 1939. In early 1943, the Community Chest group formed the National War Fund, which would provide the structure and publicity for a national campaign that would coordinate the local fund drives of community chests and “war chests” that had been created to raise

³¹⁸ Harold J. Seymour, *Design for Giving: The Story of the National War Fund, Inc., 1943-1947* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947), p. 3.

money for war relief.³¹⁹ The War Fund included the USO and the United Seaman's Service, and many of the larger foreign relief appeals; a similar organization combined the major Jewish war charities into the United Jewish Appeal.

The result was two massive fund drives, one for the Red Cross and one for the National War Fund each year for 1943, 1944 and 1945. The two appeals saturated the media with urges to give, and volunteer solicitors went door to door to raise money. All of this helped raise the profile of charity as patriotic and effective. "Without the Red Cross We'd Be Sunk," a soldier declared in a headline in the *New York Times Magazine*. Similarly, Aldrich put the services of the National War Fund at the disposal of "Our Own and for Our Allies." He pointed out that "because of the tremendous size of the problem" of foreign relief, the government would handle the bulk of the care; however, he argued, private organizations supported by the War Fund could respond more quickly and more flexibly to emerging problems in meeting needs. Work with wartime voluntary organizations was often also filtered through feminized, romanticized lenses, particularly the work overseas of the Red Cross. An Avon advertisement declared female Red Cross workers "Miss American 1944," while *National Geographic* ran a series of articles examining the activities of the "Red Cross Girl Overseas."³²⁰ The organizational impetus

³¹⁹ War Relief Control Board, *Voluntary Relief During World War II*, Department of State Publication 2566 (Washington, DC: U.S. G.P.O., 1946); *People and Events*, p. 91-92. Joseph E. Davies, a Democrat and former ambassador to the Soviet Union headed the WRCB; Charles Warren, a Democratic lawyer, former assistant attorney general, and legal historian, joined Davies and Taft. Warren replaced Frederick Keppel, the former president of the Carnegie Corporation, who died in 1943. Taft's involvement in both the WRCB and the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services demonstrates Roosevelt's willingness to allow the voluntary sector a strong voice in wartime mobilization.

³²⁰ Turner Catledge, "Without the Red Cross, We'd Be Sunk," *New York Times Magazine* (Feb. 27, 1944), p. 5-7, 31; "Miss America 1944," *Ladies Home Journal* (March 1944); "You Need the Red Cross," *Ladies Home Journal* (April 1944), p. 6; Margaret Cotter, "Red Cross Girl Overseas," *National Geographic Magazine* (Dec. 1944), p. 745-768; Winthrop Aldrich, "For Our Own and For Our Allies," *New York Times*

given private fundraising was equally as striking as the rehabilitation of charity's public image. The Community Chest movement built permanent organizations out of local war funds in towns where no organization had existed. War appeals had "unlocked fresh wellsprings of private generosity," and increased the roster of Community Chests from 350 cities raising \$76 million in 1930 to 1,300 cities raising over \$200 million in 1950.³²¹

The war helped draw organized labor into the orbit of organized charity. With local boards of community chests, social agencies, and the Red Cross typically dominated by business elites, labor unions stayed generally suspicious of—if not openly antagonistic toward—organized charity. Red Cross chapters in Appalachia in the early 1930s, for example, had refused to give relief to the starving families of striking coal miners. However, as war fundraising became more widespread, both the AFL and the CIO established their own war relief departments, in order that labor could be credited with its own contribution, instead of having the donations of unionized workers subsumed under the name of the company they worked for. The CIO war relief committee asked workers to give "one hour of pay per month" for war relief in early 1942, and threatened to run their own national fundraising campaigns to compete with the Red Cross and local community chests. Community Chest leaders, realizing the growing power exercised by union leaders over members' contributions, had recruited David McDonald of the United Steel Workers and Thomas Lyons of the American Federation of Labor to serve on the

Magazine (Oct. 15, 1944), 13, 36; "The Quality of Mercy," *Newsweek* (Oct. 2, 1944), p. 42; "National War Fund, 1944," *Collier's* (Oct. 7, 1944), p. 78.

³²¹ Chester Snell, "The Enduring Value of United Service Organizations," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945): 191-202; Bradley Buell, *Community Planning for Human Services* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952): 422.

national Community Chest board. In the summer of 1942, Chest and union leaders hammered out an agreement that recommended to local chest campaigns that labor be courted by crediting union donations specifically to unions, by putting local labor leaders on Chest boards, and by developing labor subcommittees to specifically focus on unionized workers.³²² But while recognition came fairly easily, direct influence did not—one author noted that even in Detroit, with its powerful union presence, labor had difficulty getting its own projects funded.³²³

Taxation made voluntary fundraising easier during World War Two, particularly among labor groups. While taxation is generally thought to decrease the willingness of people to give, the expansion of the income tax in 1943 to nearly all income brackets created administrative machinery that enabled voluntary groups to make their campaigns more effective. As companies began to withhold federal income tax and Social Security payments regularly from workers' paychecks, it was relatively simple to add a deduction for union-supported war chests and community chests. Just as the Selective Service had opened up opportunities for private family agencies to reach out to new groups, the state's expansion of its taxation power extended the reach of voluntary fundraising. Community Chest leaders realized the boon that this represented: not only would it reduce the effort needed to collect workers' donations, but giving in installments often meant a bigger gift than one single donation. Not all corporations were eager to collaborate with the chests and unions; to many, according to one author, "the idea in general resembled too closely the 'checkoff' for union dues." Taxation, however,

³²²"Labor and the Welfare Funds," *Social Service Review* (Dec., 1942): 677-678; Bent Taylor, "Labor Becomes a Big Giver," *Survey Graphic* (Feb., 1943): 46-49, 61.

³²³ Robert MacRae, "Organized Labor in Social Planning," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944): 219-227.

softened the image of the check off, and active campaigning by the business-dominated National War Fund convinced more than 40 national corporations employing over two million workers to allow the practice; direct requests by union and chest officials in smaller industries produced similar agreements. A historian of the United Way later observed, "The results of payroll deduction have been spectacular," and laid the foundation for the post-war financial success of private fundraising.³²⁴

Labor's participation in wartime voluntary fundraising, and their gradual integration into local voluntary fundraising organizations, signaled an important shift in the public image of charity. Labor unions did not give up their aspirations for a more complete public welfare state. As Irving Abramson, president of the New York State CIO Council and head of the CIO's Committee for American and Allied War Relief told the National Social Work Conference in 1944, "It is true that the C.I.O. is interested in expanding the scope of government responsibility in social welfare and health programs, because we feel that private agencies cannot do the whole job fully or adequately. But we recognize that private agencies have served society well in the past and have their place."³²⁵ Where in the 1930s, labor unions were often pitted against private social agencies dominated by employers and hostile to public welfare, now during the war a mutual understanding of sorts had emerged. It also became clear to union leaders that the welfare state's expansion might be more halting than anticipated during the 1930s. Thus, said Robert Kinney, director of the Division of Community Services of the CIO's War Relief Committee to the NCSW in 1945,

³²⁴ Seymour, p. 56; *People and Events*, p. 94; Taylor, p. 47.

³²⁵ Irving Abramson, "The Social Responsibility of Labor in the Postwar World," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944): 73.

... it is true that the C.I.O. stands for full government assumption of responsibility for the health and welfare of all citizens, It is equally true that the government has not been able to assume that responsibility fully. While we are sparing no effort to get legislation enacted to provide for the needs of the people, we are working with the private health and welfare agencies wherever they are effective to meeting immediate community and national health and welfare needs with services which they can, to an extent, supply.³²⁶

Labor's acceptance of private welfare as an element of postwar social welfare signaled that public sector activists had lost the ardent support of one of their most powerful constituencies.

Federal welfare officials clearly worried about wartime exigencies creating openings for welfare-oriented operations outside of public authority. The experience of World War I hung heavily over their heads. The enormously successful national private war fundraising campaigns of 1917 and 1918 had channeled patriotic fervor into funds for a host of private recreation and welfare organizations. The war's residue left not an expanded state role in the provision of such services, but rather a conviction that private philanthropy could in fact handle issues of major national importance—a conviction embodied in the Hoover administration. Thus, public welfare advocates deeply feared that the Second World War would again set the stage for voluntarism to outshine public efforts, and would erode the gains made during the New Deal. In early meetings of the FSC, public agency supporters such as Dorothy Kahn of the AASW and Edith Abbott of the University of Chicago (representing the American Association of Schools of Social Work) urged that Harry Hopkins's dictum of prohibiting Federal Emergency Relief Administration funds from flowing to private agencies be observed during wartime.

³²⁶Robert Kinney "Should Unions Organize Their Own Services?" *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945): 234-241.

Abbott said bluntly, "Public funds to public agencies. Get in the no-subsidy point."

Swift of the FWAA pressed Abbott and Kahn for interpretation, asking if they meant that private agencies should do *nothing* to help with wartime needs. Kahn replied no, but that public responsibility should be stimulated, "rather than encouraging the collection of private funds for what is recognized as public function."³²⁷ Outside of the FSC, some private agencies moved to guarantee a role for themselves in civil defense work. In Bridgeport, Connecticut, private family agencies were placed on defense committees specifically to ensure that "at the close of the defense program," private agencies would not be left "without the proper sphere of action."³²⁸

New wartime voluntarism not only threatened "new alignments" but also established charitable institutions, such as the FWAA. As shown above, Community Chest leaders had moved quickly to harness the surging war relief organizations so their efforts would carry along, instead of crowd out, existing organizations. But there were bitter institutional rivalries within the voluntary sector nonetheless. As during World War One, the Red Cross anticipated an increased program of emergency service to families of servicemen. Volunteers or untrained workers usually provided those services, and they cut close to the types of services offered by family agencies.³²⁹ The FWAA's Executive Committee worried in early 1941 about the rapidly growing Red Cross juggernaut: "Undoubtedly, questions will be raised with regard to this program, particularly in

³²⁷FSC Minutes, May 15, 1941, Box 1, Entry 59, RG 215.

³²⁸ *Family Security Confidential Bulletin*, No. 20 (Jan. 28, 1942), CBSM, Folder 2.

³²⁹Mary B. Sayles, *Home Service in Action* (New York: New York County Chapter, Red Cross, 1921); John F. McClymer, *War and Welfare: Social Engineering in America, 1890-1925* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 159-165. For reactions of family agencies to the Red Cross in World War One, see American Association for Organizing Charity, Executive Committee Agenda, May 30, 1919, Folder 10, Box 6, FSAA; American Association for Organizing Family Social Work, Executive Committee Agenda, April 13, 1920, Folder 11, Box 6, FSAA.

communities where family agencies exist at present.”³³⁰ Family agencies, and especially the national leadership of the FWAA, saw the Red Cross as expansionist and opportunistic. The Red Cross, aside from its monopoly on many military services, had the advantage of a nationwide network of local organizations that, particularly in rural areas, far surpassed the coverage of FWAA-affiliated agencies. Moreover, the Red Cross enjoyed a less stigmatized image than older welfare agencies. In cases where local Red Cross chapters agreed to refer family problems to existing service agencies, “many service men have shown considerable sensitivity on this point and have resented the Red Cross referring matters to other agencies.”³³¹ If the Red Cross pressed the issue of “family service,” particularly in areas where FWAA members already existed, the FWAA feared “the whole present function of existing private family agencies would go over to the American Red Cross,” make it even harder for them to raise money, and leave them with a residue of “older and less helpable clients.”³³²

FWAA fears were not entirely unfounded. Red Cross executive director Robert Bondy freely admitted that his organization intended to offer social work services not only to the families of servicemen (which the FWAA estimated would include eight to ten million men) but also “where there is a blank in the local program of family service ... in many communities where there are no member agencies of the Family Association of America, the Red Cross chapter carries on, if it chooses, certain activities of civilians.”³³³

To counter the Red Cross’s home service work, the FWAA relied on its traditional charge

³³⁰FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, January 1, 1941, Folder 1, Box 7, FSAA Records.

³³¹*Family Security Confidential Bulletin* No. 15 (November 15, 1941), CBSM. Folder 2, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215.

³³²FWAA Committee on Family Welfare Program, Minutes, January 9, 1942, Folder 52, Box 10, FSAA Records.

³³³FSC Minutes, September 9, 1941, Box 1, Entry 59, RG 215.

that the Red Cross depended on volunteer workers and lacked the professional core of workers that the FWAA put at the center of its existence.³³⁴ Privately, the FWAA's worries about the incursion of the Red Cross revealed that their professional claims had not yet distinguished and solidified the status of their agencies.

Thus, the Red Cross in particular bore the brunt of criticism by domestic public and private agencies. Public welfare activists were extremely worried about the wartime prominence of the Red Cross. The Family Service Committee convened a subcommittee devoted solely to the "Relationship with the Red Cross," and in September 1941 the full Committee met with Bondy in one of its more rancorous sessions. Edith Abbott invoked the precedent of World War One, observing that "some of the older members of the committee" were concerned that the Red Cross would again attempt to undertake the "miscellaneous home service work" it had done at that time, despite the fact that in the intervening years both public and private agencies had expanded. Fred Hoehler of the American Public Welfare Association added that by moving into such fields, the Red Cross allowed local public officials, and sometimes the boards of private agencies, to "pass the buck." Both viewpoints drew on the basic philosophy of public welfare advocates that the Hopkins FERA regulations had embodied: private efforts often discouraged the development of public responsibility. Others saw it as an entering wedge for the resurgence of voluntarism; said one public official, "we are certainly none of us unaware of the fact that there is a residual aspiration in the United States somehow to do away with the public welfare and go back to private initiative, and that frequently cuts

³³⁴See, for example, Linton Swift to Robert Bondy, February 20, 1942, Folder 52, Box 10, FSAA Records.

into the boards of private agencies and no doubt into some of the chapters of the Red Cross.”³³⁵

Neither public welfare concerns regarding public responsibility, nor the private agency concerns regarding professional status, made much headway outside of social work circles. Bondy of the Red Cross replied testily to Abbot and Hoehler that “I think it would be a good, debatable question to say an educational job of establishing a way for public service in any public field can be best attained by having all private effort withdraw from that field.” He continued that “there are things in this emergency situation that are not being well done and that are not being adequately done” that should not wait for philosophical discussions of public-private boundaries.³³⁶ His point of view was echoed by others involved in war mobilization, particularly those oriented toward providing for the social and recreational needs of soldiers. Mark McCloskey, head of the recreation division of the ODHWS, “condemned the emphasis on differences between public and private effort,” to the National Conference of Social Work in 1941, specifically singling out the emphasis on professionalism. McCloskey made a pitch for “general competence” for those involved in war social work and asked pointedly: “Do you suppose they are worrying about techniques in London?”³³⁷ To Bondy and McCloskey, the professional and institutional concerns expressed by the FSC and the FWAA seemed parochial and obstructionist.

Such initial tensions dissipated as the war advanced, at both the local and national level. In Wilmington, Delaware, for example, the Red Cross began referring individuals

³³⁵FSC Minutes, September 9, 1941.

³³⁶Ibid.

³³⁷Gertrude Springer and Katherine Close, “Priorities on the Social Front,” *Survey Midmonthly* (July, 1941): 208.

with complicated social or psychological problems to the FWAA-affiliated Family Society of Wilmington in 1942, and by 1945 the Red Cross was the largest source of referrals for that agency. Similarly, FWAA national officers reported constructive discussions with their Red Cross counterparts in 1944, a markedly different atmosphere from two years earlier.³³⁸ It was clear, though, that the efforts for wartime fundraising and service had given voluntarism a higher profile as an effective, popular social phenomenon. In post-war hearings on Social Security in 1949, for instance, Congressman Daniel Reed of New York told Arthur Altmeyer, Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, that Reed's home town of Dunkirk had collected over \$200,000 in aid for Dunkirk, France during the war, and that he would "not want to see anything done that is going to discourage this very generous American spirit, which is known all over the world." Such discouragement would include, in Reed's view, an expansion of federal public assistance.³³⁹

The Aspirations of Public Casework

On the eve of the war, though, public welfare officials were quite confident. They looked out not on the rudimentary, emergency welfare structures that voluntary agencies had helped build in the early 1930s but to a nationwide system of public welfare, elaborated to the local level. To them, the primary question at the end of the 1930s was not the relationship between public and private welfare, but the extent to which public welfare would expand. The most powerful among the drafters of the Social Security Act,

³³⁸FSD B.O.D. Minutes, Jan. 20, 1942; Feb. 15, 1944; FSD Executive Director's Annual Report, Oct. 16, 1945; FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, Oct. 13, 1944, Folder 2, Box 7, FSAA.

³³⁹ United States Congress, House Ways and Means Committee, *Social Security Act Amendments of 1949*, 81st Cong. 2nd sess. Feb. 28, 1949, p. 116-117.

those who backed the social insurance elements of the Act (unemployment insurance and old age insurance), believed that the establishment and eventual expansion of their programs would have made public assistance programs unnecessary. In the most optimistic views, the continuation of a public works program and the creation of public health insurance would round out a full-fledged economic security apparatus that would render both categorical aid and private charity largely unnecessary.³⁴⁰

However, evidence on both the federal level and on the ground suggested that, at the very least, a fully realized welfare state was unlikely. Congressional conservatism and increasing international problems weakened the hand of liberals within Roosevelt's administration and made further policy innovations difficult, largely freezing Social Security as the central element, instead of the first component, of a public welfare system.³⁴¹ Nor had public welfare institutions won the wholesale support of social work professionals. The staffs of private casework agencies, which in many cities had gone over to work in the emergency public relief organizations in the early New Deal, began drifting back to private agencies by the late 1930s.³⁴²

Despite these setbacks on the national and local levels, public welfare activists saw the partial programs in place in the late 1930s as the initial building blocks in a system that would completely displace the claim private agencies had for those in need. Moreover, reformers remained hopeful that a more comprehensive system could and

³⁴⁰Gordon, p. 255-258.

³⁴¹ William Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932 to 1940* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

³⁴²For example, in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Wilmington, Delaware, where private workers had been recruited wholesale from local family agencies, by the mid-1930s many had left public relief to return to private work. See Mark Haidet, *A Legacy of Leadership: A History of the Family Service of Greater St. Paul* (St. Paul, MN: Family Service of Greater St. Paul, 1984); Barry J. Plimmer, "Voluntarism in Crisis: An Exploration of the Effects of the Great Depression in Delaware, 1929-1938" (Ph.D. diss., University of Hull, 1996), p. 150.

would be built, that 1930s welfare policy advances were “preliminary steps toward a comprehensive public policy.”³⁴³ Gaps in the system worried public welfare advocates, but it indicated to them a need for more and better public programs, not that the public sector was incapable of meeting those needs.

Social services were one of the goals on the agenda for a welfare state that would include more than basic financial provision. The phrase “social service” infused public welfare policy in the early 1940s, from planning aid to persons who might be displaced by military action to support for crippled children.³⁴⁴ “Services” had the advantage, and disadvantage, of meaning all things to all people. The National Resources Planning Board’s *Security, Work and Relief Policies*, published in 1943, pointed to “community resources that are commonly known as the social services” as a critical element in “the enhancement of the physical health of our people and the assurance of decent and healthy living conditions for future citizens.” Under this catchall, the NRPB defined services as health care, education, child welfare services, public housing, and “assistance in the solution of problems of economic and community adjustment”—i.e., social casework—as supporting elements of its plan for a full-employment economy supported by a generous welfare state. What services meant first and foremost was anything that was not cash. Eveline Burns, an economist at the Columbia School of Social Work and director of research for the NRPB, explained in the *Survey Midmonthly*, “By no means all the needs of the economically insecure and the low income population can or should be met by

³⁴³Skocpol and Amenta, p. 85.

³⁴⁴See, for example, *Family Security Confidential Bulletin* No. 20, January 28, 1942, in Circulars, Bulletins, Statements and Memos, Folder 2, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215, N.A., “Here in Washington...” *Survey Midmonthly* (September, 1942): 243; Marietta Stevenson, “New Governmental Services for People in Wartime,” *Social Service Review* (December, 1942): 595-604.

money payments.” Providing service rather than money “would permit a substantial increase in living standards with a minimum of both cost and interference with the wage and price structure.” Buried in that observation was the hint that services, rather than income transfers, might prove a more palatable route for expanding government programs. If as one historian argues, the NRPB report “embraced much of what became the liberal social agenda for decades after World War II,” then the emergence of services onto that agenda represents the beginning of a trend away from providing financial security toward “servicing” the poor, which would culminate three decades later in the poverty policies of the 1960s.³⁴⁵

What “service” meant to social workers, though, was primarily what later scholars would refer to as “soft” or “intangible” services, such as counseling or guidance, as opposed to “hard” or “tangible” services, such as health care, day care, job training, or legal aid. Social workers did not necessarily see the two in such stark contrast; rather, they hoped that as they provided tangible services, the relationship with the client would be also shaped by the intangible service of the worker’s professional training. Intangible service would depend on the strength of its practitioners to promote it. The idea that social work, and particularly casework, could be identified as a public service, was promoted in the 1930s by social casework activists in federal service, particularly in the Children’s Bureau and later in the Social Security Administration’s Bureau of Public

³⁴⁵National Resources Planning Board, *Security, Work, and Relief Policies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 460-462, 493, 520-521; Eveline Burns, “Freedom from Want: the NRPB Report,” *Survey Midmonthly* (April, 1943): 108-109; Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 252.

Assistance.³⁴⁶ These administrators and activists were mostly trained social workers who shared a similar educational background with private agency personnel and had often worked in private agencies before moving into public organizations. As public welfare expanded during the 1930s, these activists hoped it would be accompanied by provision for casework techniques in which they had been trained and had perhaps practiced in other settings.

By the early 1940s, state welfare agencies became systematized through the influence of the federal Bureau of Public Assistance, and began employing trained social workers in some of their supervisory positions. Moreover, in an administrative ruling in 1943, the BPA allowed for states to claim “services” as a legitimate activity to claim for federal matching funds. What was actually covered under this definition showed the elasticity of the term. According to one social work educator who trained public agency workers, “services” ranged from referrals to “interpretation of agency policy” to “interviews not related to assistance” to securing an artificial leg to lending a sympathetic ear. Moreover, states had an incentive to have a broad definition of service, for as one public welfare supervisor told her staff, “Failure, therefore, to report services in these categories was costing the state money for which it was not getting federal

³⁴⁶ Andrew J. Polsky, *The Rise of the Therapeutic State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991): 155-156; Gordon, p. 267-268; 272-273. Gordon argues that the Children’s Bureau would have been much more committed to promoting casework if it controlled the Aid to Dependent Children program; she sees Jane Hoey, head of the Bureau of Public Assistance, as part of a younger generation “critical of the Children’s Bureau’s emphasis on casework.” (p. 260). Hoey was certainly less orthodox than many other professional caseworkers. While Hoey stressed the inclusion of services in the programs under her administration in an address to the NCSW in 1937, when pressed on the issue the following year by dubious social workers, she replied, “I think public assistance [i.e. money] is one of the most important services to people, when you’re starving.” Nonetheless, as this chapter demonstrates, Hoey saw at least quasi-professional casework as an eventual goal for public assistance administration. Cited in Leslie H. Leighninger, “The Development of Social Work as a Profession,” (Ph.D. diss., U.C. Berkeley, 1982): 163-164. See also, Andrew J. Polsky, “Welfare State History: The Limits of the New” and Linda Gordon, “Reply to Andrew Polsky,” *Journal of Policy History* v. 7 no. 4 (1995): 447, 461.

reimbursement.”³⁴⁷ Services could open the door to bureaucratic opportunism as equally as to increased professionalization.

The overwhelming pressure of sheer numbers of people on relief during the 1930s had been a major factor in precluding attempts by professionally trained public caseworkers to undertake individualized, case-by-case relationships that would focus on emotional problems as well as financial assistance. But as defense production began to slash unemployment, caseloads tumbled. Caseloads in all welfare programs dropped during the war, most sharply in state and local general assistance programs, which declined 84 percent from May 1940 to August 1945. ADC caseloads dropped 37 percent from 1942 to 1944 (though they began to creep up thereafter), while old age assistance and aid to the blind declined by 10 percent.³⁴⁸ Public casework activists hoped that with the dawn of more reasonable numbers of clients, both the preventative and rehabilitative ideals to which casework aspired could be incorporated into public welfare practice. These would complete the vision of a welfare system that would offer security and encourage self-sufficiency. For instance, Alabama public welfare work, as one observer wrote in 1941, “in the beginning found it necessary to emphasize primarily the function of assistance to those in need. As defense is redefining the scope of the program to some degree, it is likewise leading more and more workers to give greater attention to the

³⁴⁷ Amelia Hardesty, “Teaching Job Organization to New Workers in a Public Agency,” *The Family* (October, 1945): 228-229; Martha Derthick, *The Influence of Federal Grants: Public Assistance in Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 130. On later abuse of the “service” clauses by states, see Martha Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending for Social Services Grants* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1975).

³⁴⁸ Federal Security Agency, Social Security Administration, *Social Security Yearbook, 1945* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1947), p. 146.

second phase of the welfare job—that of building up resources and preventing family and individual dependency.”³⁴⁹

A more prosaic motivation also drove the embrace of “service”: the rapid stigmatization first of “charity” and then of “relief.” Jane Hoey, head of the federal Bureau of Public Assistance, which oversaw ADC and other public assistance programs, admitted that the word “relief” “seems to wreck us.”³⁵⁰ Anna Cassat of the North Carolina Department of Charities and Welfare hopefully concluded, “public welfare is at last beginning to act on the realization that the word ‘welfare’ is a much broader term than ‘relief’ or ‘assistance.’”³⁵¹ However, “welfare” was fast approaching the same level of unpopularity of “relief” and “charity,” as evidenced by the attitudes of the voluntary sector. As shown in the previous chapter, voluntary casework agencies began to change their names in the late 1930s and more rapidly in the 1940s from “Associated Charities” or “Family Welfare Association” toward titles along the lines of “Family Service Agency.” Linton Swift, executive director of the Family Welfare Association of America (which would replace “Welfare” with “Service” in 1946) was on record with his distaste for the word “welfare.”³⁵² Agencies hoped a stress on the neutral concept of “service” would attenuate their connection to monetary relief, and attract a wider range of clients besides the stigmatized poor. Public welfare professionals sensed the same rhetorical

³⁴⁹*Family Security Confidential Bulletin*, No. 10 (August 26, 1941), CBSM. Folder 1, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215, N.A.

³⁵⁰ Minutes June 6, 1941, Subcommittee on Community Organization, Family Security Committee, Box 2, Entry 59, RG 215.

³⁵¹ Anna A. Cassatt, “Changing Emphasis in Public Welfare,” *Survey Midmonthly* (January, 1944): 17.

³⁵² The ease with which voluntary associations could change their names makes them a convenient barometer for tracking the language of social welfare. The national organization of voluntary family societies in 1917 was the American Organization for Organizing Charity; in 1919, it changed to the cumbersome American Association for Organizing Family Social Work. In 1930, reflecting the brief attraction of “welfare,” it shifted to the Family Welfare Association of America, and in 1946 to the Family Service Association of America. In the 1990s, it became the Alliance for Children and Families.

shift, though it would take until the 1960s for the phrase “social service” to become widespread in the titles of public welfare agencies

The aspirations of public welfare professionals were challenged by social workers associated with the voluntary sector. Even as public welfare expanded, voluntary institutions retained the loyalty of the majority of family caseworkers, for two primary reasons: professionalization and bureaucratization. Public welfare, in their eyes, had not enough of the former and too much of the latter. Relatively few professional social workers were running welfare programs. As Helen Wright, Dean of the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration, observed in 1944, “the new assistance programs ... lie partly within and partly without the field of professional social services.... Measured by the proportion of workers with professional status, however, they are largely on the outside, sometimes looking in, sometimes resolutely facing the other way.”³⁵³ Second, in places that did use professional caseworkers for public welfare, the funding and flexibility of welfare departments raised questions surrounding public casework. Increasingly, public welfare agencies were seen as overly bureaucratic, rule-bound, inflexible and impersonal—a critique that would be advanced later in the century, by the left in the 1960s, and by the right in the 1980s. Ironically, within programs that had federal funding, some of those conditions had come as a result of the response to the earlier problems of public welfare: new federal bureaucracies and rules were designed to root out political corruption and promote standardization and equity in programs

³⁵³Helen R. Wright, “Social Services at the Outbreak of the War,” in Helen R. Wright, *Social Service in Wartime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), p. 10.

administered by states and localities.³⁵⁴ Having built the basic structures of welfare in the 1930s, public social workers now had to face the problems of working within these legal and organizational constraints.

In some instances, it was professional workers in public agencies who highlighted the problems with their attempts at casework. Sylvia Sacks, a former caseworker for the Philadelphia Department of Public Assistance pointed out that public agencies were “circumscribed by the limiting concept of eligibility,” in that only a fraction of those in need could be helped, and that clients often left the system before any long-term casework relationship could be established. These problems were not necessarily inherent but rather reflected an “immature phase of its developing social program.” Public agencies, argued Sacks, could serve as the entry point for a “therapeutic program” that would involve a range of community agencies, including private casework resources. Sacks, however, had left public assistance to return to school at Bryn Mawr and to do field work at the private Family Society of Philadelphia.³⁵⁵ Perle Kingloff, a supervisor within the New York City Department of Welfare, called explicitly for case partnerships between public and private agencies. While public authorities now had acquired the function for providing for relief, said Kingloff, their responsibility was limited by statute. Once relief ended, contact would also end, frustrating any sort of casework relationship. She hoped private agencies could help on difficult cases, and also help educate the

³⁵⁴ James Patterson notes that the BPA Handbook of Public Assistance, which set down rules for state administrators of federally funded programs, was five inches thick by the 1960s. James Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty, 1890-1985* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 87.

³⁵⁵ Sylvia Sacks, “Public Agency Intake and the Casework Goal,” *The Family* (April, 1942): 63-68.

community to the need for individualized attention for public welfare clients.³⁵⁶ A strong sense that private agencies still provided the optimal environment for practicing casework in light of an emerging bureaucratic public welfare state pervaded the professional literature on casework.

One study of collaboration between public and private agencies in the early 1940s indicated the potential for a division of labor such as Kingloff suggested, and which had been proposed in the mid-1920s. In cases carried jointly by the Jewish Social Service Bureau of Detroit and the Wayne County Bureau of Social Aid, the researcher (a social work student at the JSSB) noted the positive effect of the private agency's work with "relieving tensions, anxieties, fears and conflicts" with clients also involved with public agencies. Interviews with public social workers indicated an interest in referring clients to the voluntary agency, and an acknowledgement that they were not equipped to do intensive casework. But in practice, most of the conferences held about clients were called by the voluntary agency, not the public, and the public agency referred few clients to the voluntary group. Public agency workers were reluctant to discuss cases they had spent little time with, and the felt that the voluntary agency did not understand the pressures the public agency worked under.³⁵⁷

Though such results did not bode well for intense one-on-one work in public agencies, or, for that matter, close public-private collaboration, public casework activists resisted the notion that private agencies were needed as the conduits of professional casework to welfare clients. Aside from casework proponents in the federal welfare

³⁵⁶Perle Kingloff, "Use of Private Agencies by Public Assistance Departments," *The Family* (January, 1942): 303-309.

³⁵⁷Rose Kaplan, "The Cooperative Handling of Cases By a Private and Public Agency," (MSW, Wayne State University, 1944), p. 48, 56, 69-74.

administrations and their scattered colleagues in the states, a cadre of social work teachers dedicated themselves to building on the profession's inroads in public agencies. Several responses to Kingloff's article in *The Family* argued that the snapshot of the division of labor between public and private interpreted temporary conditions as essential qualities of both public and private agencies, and the Detroit study had indicated that much of the energy of the Wayne County public agency in 1940 was given to setting up the procedures and intake of the new county organization. Public agencies were not permanently bound by the conditions of the moment, nor were private agencies as competent or comprehensive as their proponents assumed. M.E. Holcomb, an instructor and field supervisor at the State College of Washington's School of Social Work, pointed out that administrative rules limiting contact only to relief granting could be changed. Virginia Tannar, a field work supervisor from the New York School of Social Work who worked with the New York City Department of Welfare's Training Office, agreed, and thought that experimental work could be done within public agencies themselves if they could carve out enough flexibility. Holcomb went on to point out that there were over 3,000 agencies administering public relief across the country, and that in only a fraction of those areas were there private agencies that could undertake the sorts of partnerships that Kingloff and Sacks proposed. Moreover, he added, the fact that an agency was private was "no criterion of its work," and that few of them actually lived up to the challenge of demonstrating experimental techniques.³⁵⁸

One of the most outspoken defenders of the possibility of professional casework in public welfare agencies was Eda Houwink, who in the early 1940s was a fieldwork

³⁵⁸Virginia Tannar, "Commentary," *The Family* (Jan. 1942): 309; "Readers Forum," *The Family* (March, 1942): 34-35; Wenocur and Reisch, p. 216-218.

supervisor at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration and later taught at the University of Nebraska's Graduate School of Social Work. Houwink, who received an M.S. in public administration from Washington University (St. Louis) in 1933, was particularly galled by the arrogance of professionals in private agencies who assumed that public casework faced inherent, structural barriers. The New Deal had shifted financial responsibility for the needy to the public sector, but professional status had not followed. "It must be remembered constantly that 99 percent of the people in need of assistance are being handled by public agencies," she wrote, "with the private agencies handling only the remaining one percent. If the public agency is the place where people are found, then it is the place where trained workers also must be found."³⁵⁹ While public institutions may have not offered the best chances for professional casework in previous periods, she warned both public and private workers not to "unconsciously stabilize the function of the public agency at its present level of performance, and define its job by the performance of untrained workers rather than by the potentialities inherent in the job itself."³⁶⁰

To Houwink, professionalism could overcome and adjust to the limits of any given location of casework practice. As she put it, casework aimed to help people in both public and private settings, and the "controlling factor in it all is the skill and professional attitude of each worker and the staff as a whole."³⁶¹ Critics of casework in public settings pointed to the bureaucratic rules that bound caseworkers to only certain kinds of relationships with clients, and to limits on funding which constrained the material aid

³⁵⁹Eda Houwink, "Casework in the Public Agency," *Survey Midmonthly* (Oct. 1941): 287.

³⁶⁰Eda Houwink, "The Public Agency's Challenge," *Survey Midmonthly* (April 1940): 128.

³⁶¹*ibid.*, p. 129.

they could offer. But, as Houwink argued, “We accept the laws and we live within them, but we do not therefore see them as chains to bind us and our clients, as some caseworkers would have us believe.” Rather, she said, the professional caseworker needs to focus on “creative helpfulness,” using whatever resources the agency in which she finds herself has to offer.³⁶² A discerning eye at the intake stage, the perpetual injunction not to be judgmental, and a constant sympathetic stance toward the problems of the client were all elements of casework that Houwink thought both possible and useful in public welfare practice. These were not fundamentally different from those in private agencies; the primary constraint was the amount of time one could spend with each client when facing large caseloads. But the obverse was the limit of private agencies: The selective nature of private agency work, “serves well the fortunate few who are on its rolls and it serves not at all those who fall outside.”³⁶³

Most schools of social work still presumed private agencies offered the best opportunities for best social work practice. Weaning schools of social work away from their historic connection to private institutions was one of the challenges facing public casework advocates in the early 1940s. Private agencies had been the primary venue for student training until the short-term “crash” programs for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in the 1930s. But an orientation for training for public welfare was slow to take hold in social work schools. Andrew Polsky has argued that a “school-government axis had obtained permanent status” by the late 1930s, and indeed, nearly every school offered a course in public welfare by the end of the 1930s, and nearly half employed a

³⁶²Eda Houwink, *The Place of Casework in the Public Assistance Program* (Chicago: American Public Welfare Association, 1941): 3-4.

³⁶³Houwink, “Casework,” p. 288.

specialist in public welfare on their faculty.³⁶⁴ However, it was a distinctly one-sided relationship: public casework activists realized they needed to draw on social work school graduates, but for the most part, social work schools remained firmly oriented toward the private-agency model, their public welfare courses often only “paper requirements.”³⁶⁵ The association between professionalism and private agencies would persist until the 1960s.

Committed as they were to appropriating the professional respect accorded voluntary agencies, public casework activists resisted attempts from other quarters to lower the professional bar for public welfare work. Both public welfare and family service agencies faced shortages of personnel during the war. Male workers were drawn into the military, and the increased activity of the Red Cross and the agencies in the United Service Organizations also drew trained personnel away from established agencies.³⁶⁶ Since only 18 states had schools accredited by the American Association of Schools of Social Work (AASSW), and met only a fraction of the demand for trained public welfare workers, a group organized in 1942 as the National Association of Schools of Social Administration, advocated an undergraduate course of training that would provide the minimum qualifications for public welfare work, instead of the two-year MSW requirement that had grown up with urban private agency practice.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴Polsky, p. 153; Leighninger, 149.

³⁶⁵Leighninger, p. 149; Ernest V. Hollis and Alice L. Taylor, *Social Work Education in the United States: The Report of a Study Made for the National Council on Social Work Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951): p. 213.

³⁶⁶Mary B. Novick, “Shortages of Qualified Social Welfare Personnel in 1941,” March 14, 1942, in FSC General Folder #2, Box 2, Entry 60, RG 215, NA. Linton Swift, “War Years in Family Social Work, 1938-1945,” *Highlights* (March, 1945): 18; Louise C. Odencrantz, “These Jobs Beg For Workers,” *Survey Midmonthly* (September, 1945): 219.

³⁶⁷Leighninger, p. 203-224.

One might think that with its orientation toward competent staffing of public welfare agencies, the NASSA would be embraced by public caseworkers. But they did not see the NASSA's development as salutary. The undergraduate programs tended to be dominated by departments of sociology, and usually devoted only about a third of their requirements to social work content. For those most active in promoting the use of professional caseworkers in public welfare, this represented a challenge to professionalism in general and to the spread of casework in particular. The Chicago School of Social Service Administration, the center of gravity of public social service, was one of the driving forces of the AASW's efforts to oppose, then co-opt, the NASSA. Within the federal public welfare system, the Children's Bureau strongly supported a fully professional model for specialized social services. Hoey and the Bureau of Public Assistance, whose categorical programs required thousands of workers, were open to more flexible approaches to training workers but did not relinquish the ultimate goal of graduate training.³⁶⁸ Public casework advocates preferred to try to shift the orientation of AASSW institutions toward professional public welfare work. Anne Fenalson from the University of Minnesota's Department of Sociology and Social Work had started placing students in public agencies in the area to do their field work, since, she pointed out, 85

³⁶⁸ibid, 212-215, 235. Federal administrators instead promoted in-service training through the BPA's Technical Training Service and began publishing material for public agency workers to familiarize themselves with the core elements of therapeutic casework. Two publications, Charlotte Towle, *Common Human Needs*, Public Assistance Report No. 8 (Washington: GPO, 1945) and Grace Marcus, *The Nature of Service in Public Assistance Administration*, Public Assistance Report No. 10 (Washington: GPO, 1946), would become the focus of controversy in the late 1940s, as I will discuss in my next chapter.

This battle over professional qualifications for social work would be revisited in the late 1960s with an even more rapidly expanding public social service sector, a continuing paucity of MSWs, and a set of public administrators less sympathetic to the claims of social work professionals. The result was the approval of the bachelor's degree of social work and the emergence of the "two-track" system of public welfare administration, with MSWs dealing with interpersonal problems and lesser trained "eligibility technicians" processing claims for assistance.

percent of casework (broadly construed) positions in the area were in public agencies.

The emphasis of the Minnesota program was “how to do casework within an agency structure and despite its limitations,” and though Fenalson granted the “rigidities” of public welfare institutions, she maintained that “real” casework was possible.³⁶⁹

Experiences in the field often belied the optimism of advocates of professionalization. A University of Chicago graduate complained in 1942 that “Coming to the back yard of the Chicago school, and getting acquainted with the terribly backward welfare programs here hasn’t been conducive for maintenance of idols or illusions.” Another professional social worker noted with resignations, “there have always been children who have been permitted to go unfed; that actually there is very little that the caseworker can do to change anything.”³⁷⁰ Virginia Tannar from the New York School of Social Work admitted that the intersection of rules and professional training was difficult; students under her supervision coped in a variety of ways, from heavy-handed application of policy to attempts to circumvent rules—strategies that would serve generations of public social workers to come.³⁷¹

This tension between public- and voluntary sector caseworkers, and the difficulties in converting public welfare practice wholesale into a private agency model, led to scattered efforts to demonstrate the potential of such practices with limited groups of clients. Houwink recommended that trained workers take on informal demonstration

³⁶⁹ Anne Fenalson, “Integration of Classroom Theory with Field Practice,” *The Family* (April, 1941): 52. Fenalson was the AASSW representative of a joint AASSW-NASSA committee in 1944 that began the process of drawing the newer organization into the orbit of the older group. Leighninger, p. 228.

³⁷⁰ A. Mitzner to Marion Hathway, Nov. 1, 1942, cited in Leighninger, p. 158; Peele, “We Who Must Say ‘No’,” p. 127-128.

³⁷¹ Virginia Tannar, “Student Problems in Field Work in a Public Assistance Agency,” *The Family* (January, 1945): 345-351; Elizabeth Ferguson, *Social Work: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1975), p. 10.

projects, selecting a handful of clients with whom they would spend more time, to try to show the advantages of individualized attention. Even a field report by the FWAA noted a smattering of casework being done in some public assistance agencies in the West Coast, where there was a much less dense presence of private agencies.³⁷² Though she admitted that such efforts were difficult in public assistance settings, she reasserted that “the skill and insight of the worker will see a way once she is convinced of the necessity for doing a demonstration job.”³⁷³ Such demonstration jobs would begin to rapidly accumulate in the postwar period, and formed one of the most instrumental factors in the expansion of public casework in the early 1960s.³⁷⁴

One early experiment, firmly linked to wartime conditions, did offer a chance for public caseworkers to prove their prowess. Wartime disruptions, and particularly juvenile delinquency, became the focal point for activists in the Bureau of Public Assistance and the Children’s Bureau to experiment with providing professional social services, including casework. In Newport News, Virginia, the two agencies joined in a demonstration project to use social services to counter the problems of wartime expansion. The expansion of military activities in the Hampton Roads that had drawn so much attention in 1941 area accelerated after Pearl Harbor. Newport News itself, home of the Newport News Shipyard and a major rail depot for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, experienced the second-largest growth among major military communities

³⁷²“Summary of West Coast Services,” December 20, 1944, Folder 17, Box 14, FSAA Records.

³⁷³Houwink, “The Place of Casework,” p. 15. However, she advised that workers select cases with “hopeful prognoses” to work with in an effort to show the possibilities of casework; as Polsky has noted, creaming of clients was characteristic of many pilot projects with welfare casework. Polsky, p. 160.

³⁷⁴Winifred Bell, *Aid to Dependent Children* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965); Jennifer Mittelstadt, “The Dilemmas of the Liberal Welfare State, 1945-1964: Gender, Race, and Aid to Dependent Children,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2000), p. 113-154.

during the war, after Mobile, Alabama. Newport News Shipyard expanded from a workforce of 8,881 in September 1938, to peak of 31,016 in April 1943. Officially, the town increased 77.2% in civilian population from 1940-1943, but unofficial figures put the jump from 81,375 in the city and surrounding area in 1940 to 189,329 in 1943, an increase of 236%.³⁷⁵ The stresses of increased population had produced a predictable set of problems: extreme housing shortages, stresses on sewage and water systems, and overcrowded schools; it had revealed the lack of day care and recreation facilities; and produced rapid increases in the cost of living.³⁷⁶

State and local officials in Virginia had not been inclined to expand the functions of welfare as war approached. When the Federal Security Agency set a regional representative to Hampton Roads in November 1940 to report back on the problems of the area, they found Virginia's Commissioner of Public Welfare Harold Stauffer blasé about defense-related welfare problems. After some federal arm-twisting, a field representative noted that, "The importance of foreseeing problems was noted and the Commissioner modified his position."³⁷⁷ But local administrators were not as attuned to expanding welfare's programs during the war as they were to consolidating the programs established during the Depression. In 1943, the Virginia Department of Public Welfare began pushing for greater equity across the state in welfare payments. Thanks to the state, in Newport News average ADC payments increased 34 percent from 1943 to 1945,

³⁷⁵History Commission, World War II, Newport News. *History of the City of Newport News, 1941-45* (Richmond: Baughman Co, 1948): 69.

³⁷⁶U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Occupational Outlook Branch. *The Impact of War on the Hampton Roads Area Industrial Area Study No. 23* (December, 1944).

³⁷⁷"Special Memo-Virginia," November 25, 1940; "Problems Arising from the Defense Program as Illustrated by Two Communities with a High Concentration of Defense Activities," December 28, 1940, both in Selective Service Folder 3, Box 3, E. 60, RG 215 (Office of Community War Services), National Archives.

general assistance increased 24 percent, and old age increased 22 percent. Part of this was made possible by a decline in cases. Newport News's own general assistance welfare rolls dropped from 413 in December 1939 to 290 in December 1945. Still, statewide, welfare officials struggled to find resources to meet recognized financial needs.³⁷⁸

Expanding their welfare programs was a distant goal. Hoey pointed out that "Virginia does almost nothing" in terms of bringing "unorganized communities" up to speed for providing welfare services.³⁷⁹

Promoting "services" was one strategy in moving public welfare away from its identity with relief, and pointing those services at juvenile delinquency suggested an avenue for this more robust definition of welfare. Presenting welfare as a range of services and solutions outside of monetary aid would lend itself to establishing welfare as a permanent feature of government rather than an emergency or residual function. Appropriating such services as casework from the private sector would not only strengthen the foundations of the welfare system, but it would genuinely complement the approach to social problems favored by professional workers within public welfare. "Services and facilities as may assist in making needy individuals self-supporting" was provided for as part of an expanded public assistance program in the thwarted Wagner-Murray-Dingell bills of the mid-1940s.³⁸⁰ Newport News was an early instance of federal officials using a local community as a demonstration project for future policy innovations. In choosing Newport News as a test case for public welfare defense services,

³⁷⁸History Commission, p. 8; U.S. Children's Bureau and Bureau of Public Assistance. "A Community Plans for Its Children: Final Report, Newport News Project," Children's Bureau Publication No. 321 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1947), p. 42-43.

³⁷⁹FSC Subcommittee on Information Services, March 26, 1941, Box 2, Entry 59, RG 215.

³⁸⁰*Congressional Record*, 78th Cong., 1st sess., v. 89, pt. 1, p. 5262; Blanche Coll, *Safety Net: Welfare and Social Security, 1929 to 1979* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 148.

the fact that the local community did not make the link between welfare services and the pains of defense-related growth was hardly a barrier. As Hoey observed later, "Few people seemed aware of the extensive need for social service or were eager to stimulate community action to meet this need. To many, the situation seemed too temporary to warrant concerted efforts." However, she observed to the City Manager of Newport News, the lesson from Newport News was that "success in community organization does not depend in beginning with a foundation of widespread community concern about all problems." If "interested people" perceived a problem, they should not be discouraged from addressing it."³⁸¹ A top-down, federally initiated project such as the one the BPA and Children's Bureau set up in Newport News, might be able to stimulate or replace local initiative.

Delinquency had been among a cluster of concerns about wartime problems discussed by government, academic, social work and law enforcement authorities. The Social Protection Service of the Office of Defense, Health and Welfare Services had among its goals preventing an increase in sexual activity by underage girls drawn to defense towns and servicemen. But as historian James Gilbert observes, delinquency moved to the forefront of wartime domestic worries in 1942. War fostered the type of "family disorganization" that experts believed to be the root causes of delinquency, due to military service, mothers leaving home to work, or a transient search for wartime employment. On top of this nervous anticipation came reports of increased juvenile crimes during 1941, though even those most concerned with the problem could never

³⁸¹Jane Hoey, "A Community Experiment in the Prevention and Control of Wartime Juvenile Delinquency," [draft, October, 1944]; Hoey to Joseph C. Biggins, October 11, 1944, Folder 064.2-1944, Box 180, BPA Correspondence, RG 47.

agree on the dimensions of the problem. In Wilmington, Delaware, for example, which experienced a mild boom in defense employment, juvenile officials reported a 20 percent increase in the number of children who appeared in court in 1942; Nashville, Tennessee, enjoying wartime prosperity, saw an increase of 43 percent in cases in juvenile court between 1940 and 1943. Newport News also seemed to be exhibiting symptoms of family problems and delinquency; observers found "evidence of family breakdown" by a 74 percent increase in domestic relations court cases between 1940 and 1942. Crime statistics also seemed to speak for themselves; 203 minors were arrested in 1939, 560 in 1943.³⁸²

The Children's Bureau teamed up with the BPA to use Newport News as a test case for its preventative approach to delinquency. The Children's Bureau had the expertise on delinquency, but was constrained by the limited reach of the few direct programs it ran. It was also jousting with the Federal Bureau of Investigation to take control of federal initiatives to combat delinquency, and sought out a venue to demonstrate the efficacy of a social work oriented solution to delinquency, rather than a law enforcement approach.³⁸³ The BPA, on the other hand, was connected to local public welfare departments, yet was searching to keep welfare agencies healthy and funded during a time of prosperity. It also represented an opportunity to link professional casework and public welfare, since individual counseling and guidance, along with recreation and day care, were the three main areas of concern identified by the Newport

³⁸²Carol E. Hoffecker, *Corporate Capital: Wilmington in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), p. 116; Robert G. Spinney, *World War Two in Nashville: Transformation of the Home Front* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1998): 82; History Commission, p. 95.

³⁸³James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 24-41.

News committee. Furthermore, Newport News lacked an affiliate of the FWAA, so there was no private agency competing directly with public efforts — though the Red Cross and a U.S.O. sponsored Travelers Aid project eventually offered some casework services.³⁸⁴ By offering to provide the services of a coordinator for a Child Welfare Committee, the federal agencies convinced the city government to support the effort through its civilian defense organization. Federal officials hired Paul R. Cherney, a child welfare worker trained in psychiatric casework at Western Reserve University, as executive secretary of the Newport News project. They also brought in Dr. John Slawson, a psychiatrist and former director of the Jewish Board of Guardians of New York City—an agency on the cutting edge of therapeutic social work—as a consultant.³⁸⁵

Local officials may not have seen juvenile delinquency as rooted in a problem that casework could address. But conviction by casework advocates that their services did address some unarticulated need on the behalf of recipients drove efforts, both private and public, to find ways to provide it. Linton Swift (paraphrasing Edith Abbott) observed, “The best way to measure needs is to start meeting them.”³⁸⁶ In the Newport News project, the committee members drawn from local agencies pointed to their own agencies for solutions: “The needs of children,” concluded the final report, “were, therefore, discussed in terms of the service the particular agency was able to give.”³⁸⁷ As later

³⁸⁴Hoey, “Community Experiment,” History Commission, p. 92.

³⁸⁵Pauline Miller to Florence Hollis, June 9, 1944, Folder 064.2, Box 180, BPA Correspondence 1935-48, RG 47; Kriste Lindenmeyer, *“A Right to Childhood”: The U.S. Children’s Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-1946* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1997), p. 229-230.

³⁸⁶FSC Minutes, May 19, 1941, Box 1, Entry 59, RG 215.

³⁸⁷“A Community Plans for Its Children,” p. 28.

scholars would note, however, the tendency for needs to be defined by the solutions proffered created a self-serving justification for services such as casework.³⁸⁸

Despite the guidance from professional caseworkers, the Newport News project did not ultimately center on casework. Recreation and day nursery facilities proved to be more obvious and immediate answers to dealing with the problems of unsupervised children. The child welfare committee established by the project did help convince the city to accept Lanham Act funds to establish a day care program, and helped make children the focus of the city's recreation program. But the casework aspect of the program, promoted by the committee's "counseling and guidance" subcommittee, made little headway. Mary Lucas, a field worker for the FWAA, met with Pauline Miller of the BPA in Washington in 1943 to discuss the Newport News program. Lucas complained that while "Concern was expressed for what was happening to the family" in Newport News, not much work was being done to bolster it. She added that "there seemed little actual experimenting in casework practice, or it was not being recorded. All of this seemed to point the way to great need of family casework being included in this experiment."³⁸⁹ Moreover, while the project had the support of some public administrators as well as those active in youth issues in the community, the public perception of a link between juvenile delinquency and the war remained hazy. As the final report for the Newport News project observed, "the tendency to minimize the role of the war in producing problem behavior was noted in many quarters."³⁹⁰ The project itself

³⁸⁸Polsky, p. 264n91.

³⁸⁹Mary E. Lucas, "Information Memorandum," April 29, 1943, Folder 1, Box 11, FSAA Records.

³⁹⁰"A Community Plans for Its Children," p. 34-35.

founded on the departure of Cherney for military service and the resignation of Slawson in the summer of 1944.³⁹¹

In contrast, private agencies in Newport News sprang up to provide a range of services, including casework, to the expanding population. A newly organized Community Chest raised \$34,205 in 1940 but had grown to \$212,551 in 1945, half of which went to war-related work. The local Red Cross chapter reported over 1800 hours in “personal service work” in 1943, which included the activities of eleven Home Service Workers, uncredentialed social workers who had received some casework training in dealing with family problems.³⁹² This contrast, though, obscures the fact that voluntary efforts in Newport News were aided by Cherney, who put as much time into assisting the Community Chest with “community organization”— i.e., stimulating the organization of voluntary effort—as he did getting public services off the ground.

For federal officials, the lesson of Newport News had less to do with the efficacy of preventing juvenile delinquency and more to do with how federal agencies could develop new services on the local level, particularly under the rubric of child protection. The project’s final report focused on techniques rather than tangible results, in part because many of the accomplishments of the experiment proved to be fleeting. Hoey admitted that they could not “give quantitative estimates of the reduction or control of potential juvenile delinquency,” but that “the significance of the project lies rather in the method and effectiveness in translating community potentialities into action to deal with a particular problem.”³⁹³ Federal welfare administrators saw themselves as crystallizing

³⁹¹ibid, p. 8.

³⁹²History Commission, p. 92-102.

³⁹³Hoey, “Community Experiment.”

unarticulated needs in Newport News. Though little remained to show for their efforts after the war, this approach would inform attempts to apply casework to welfare practice in the post-war period: a technique few communities asked for but which many activists were convinced such communities needed.

Conclusion

Making a welfare state out of a warfare state, at least from the perspective of an emerging social welfare establishment, proved extremely difficult. The diffuse organization of civil defense and the limited power granted the national agencies had apparently resulted in mass confusion. A report from Mobile Alabama complained that “the situation is further complicated by the multiplicity of Federal officials and private agency representatives, all coming in from outside the State either to make a survey or to ‘do something about’ existing conditions.”³⁹⁴ Donald Howard of the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation, a prominent commentator on social work, gave qualified praise in 1943 to the ODHWS’s attempts to coordinate services, though he noted that “none of these moves can said to have succeeded signally in preventing duplication and waste, or to have provided services adequate to meet every need.” However, by the end of the war, the *Survey Midmonthly* criticized the war welfare agencies for failing to coordinate among themselves or with local communities: “the problem of ‘coordination’ in Washington and of ‘community organizations’ in localities

³⁹⁴*Family Security Confidential Bulletin* No. 10 (August 26, 1941), CBSM. Folder 1, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215. Even Hoey conceded after the war that there had been some mistakes made stemming from “confusion among the various federal agencies that believed they had some responsibility in this area.” Hoey to Thomas Devine, October 27, 1948, Folder 064.2, Box 180, BPA Correspondence 1935-48.

will still continue to badger federal administrators and baffle community leaders."³⁹⁵

The Family Security Committee was a case in point. With no operational powers, the committee attempted to extend its influence through regional committees slated to be organized in every Social Security district that would attach themselves to existing civil defense organizations. However, only several regional committees actually were convened, and they served as little more than discussion groups for various admixtures of public and private agencies.³⁹⁶ Ultimately, the FSC's information functions were absorbed by the BPA, though a more informal Advisory Committee on Social Welfare (which included Ralph Uihlein, an FWAA board member) continued to meet with Charles Taft throughout the war.³⁹⁷

Other welfare-related concerns, particularly day care and housing, had thrust themselves to national attention, but had been dealt with in the manner of wartime expediency and not through the extension of existing welfare institutions. Only in the area of juvenile delinquency did public agencies make some headway, and pointed to a possible avenue through which they could justify welfare expansion in terms that were politically popular. Even here, the wartime experience was not conclusive. As a caustic study of the war boom town of Willow Run, Michigan, home to Ford's B-24 bomber

³⁹⁵Donald Howard, "American Social Work and World War Two," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (September, 1943): 143; "Unsolved Problems," *Survey Midmonthly* (August, 1945): 209. The *Survey Midmonthly* pointed out that the three defense welfare committees used three different strategies: the Committee for Congested Production Areas tried to work through the War Production Board and War Manpower Commission; the War Services Branch of the Office of Civilian Defense tried to work with local defense committees; while the Office of Community War Services (the last outgrowth of the ODHWS) worked by transmitting local studies to federal administrators.

³⁹⁶Regional Family Security Material, Folder 1, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215.

³⁹⁷Linton Swift, "Wartime Developments in the Family Welfare Field," [April, 1943], Folder 16, Box 14, FSAA Records. The Office of Community War Services established a "Counseling Committee" in 1943, on which the FWAA was also represented; "Counseling," *Survey Midmonthly* (September, 1944): 266; FWAA Executive Committee Minutes, November 12, 1943, Folder 2, Box 7. -- see also "Service Cooperation Committee" in Margaret Rich, p. 149.

plant (and, as noted in the previous chapter, an experimental labor-led social casework service), observed, “Willow Run failed signally to develop a boom-area boom in crime, delinquency, and juvenile maladjustments.... Just as medical men almost literally held their breaths expecting the naturally indicated typhoid fever epidemic that never came, so social workers held theirs expecting the avalanche of social breakdowns—and the avalanche never moved.”³⁹⁸ Following the war, the Children’s Bureau admitted that anticipated increases in juvenile delinquency had not come to pass.³⁹⁹ Increasing fears of delinquency in the Cold War period, however, would create further opportunities for utilizing the types of approaches that public casework activists tried with little success to promote during World War II.

Even Jane Hoey admitted that public casework had not come into its own as predicted during the war. In a response to a letter urging her to promote social services for the elderly, she replied:

We agree with you that specific provision for service is a normal development of our public assistance programs.... Because the energies of our staff have necessarily been focused on the development of methods for meeting financial assistance to persons within the framework of Federal and State laws less attention has been given to the provision of services, as important as we believe these to be. However, we hope that in the future the situation will change. Since the laws and organization for providing financial aid are now fairly well established, the next logical step is for the Bureau to emphasize the provision of services.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸Lowell J. Carr and James E. Stermer, *Willow Run: A Study of Industrialization and Cultural Inadequacy* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1952), p. 271.

³⁹⁹Lindenmeyer, p. 230.

⁴⁰⁰Jane Hoey to Ben L. Grossman, August 14, 1945, Folder 064.2 F-P, Box 180, BPA Correspondence 1935-48, RG 47, N.A.

Maintaining the basic framework of welfare proved to be a higher priority than attempting to reach into the domain of private casework agencies. Not only were there gaps that the original programs did not cover, but many of those programs themselves were being rolled back. Moreover, as employment increased during the war, many local administrators scaled back general relief rolls. Aid grants remained inadequate, and families with employable members were often purged “without reference as to whether or not they are able to obtain employment.”⁴⁰¹ Private agencies, noted Bureau of Public Assistance field staff, still were “filling the breach” in many communities.⁴⁰² The result was an ever-increasing focus at the BPA on monitoring and standardizing the distribution of public assistance by state welfare agencies, to the detriment of “services.” Helen Hayden of Washington University complained that, “This emphasis on the aid program is probably due to the strong leadership from the Bureau of Public Assistance, which has encouraged rapid improvement in methods of administering public assistance. In other words, it appears that public welfare agencies are fast becoming public assistance agencies only, instead of public assistance programs being used to strengthen a public welfare program.”⁴⁰³ Social work professionals within public welfare would have to focus on a long, incremental campaign to integrate professional practice into public assistance, and for the time being, look across the public-private divide at professionals in voluntary agencies with a mixture of envy and resentment.

⁴⁰¹*Family Security Confidential Bulletin* (October 2, 1941), CBSM. Folder 1, Box 1, Entry 60, RG 215; FSC Subcommittee on Information Services, Minutes March 19, 1942, Box 2, Entry 59, RG 215.

⁴⁰²Corbett to McHugh, Feb. 18, 1943.

⁴⁰³Helen E. Hayden, “Casework Possibilities in a Public Assistance Program,” *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944): 326.

Private agencies, therefore, at the end of the war, had a freedom to maneuver that Depression-era trends might not have predicted. Public sector leaders admitted as much. Ewan Clague of the U.S. Employment Bureau wrote that there “does not seem to be any reason for private social agencies to take a discouraged view of the future”; by focusing on more specialized services that were “developmental in character,” they could complement existing public institutions. Arch Mandel of Community Chests and Councils, Inc., concurred, emphasizing that private agencies needed to emphasize quality, preventative services in areas that the government was not operating.⁴⁰⁴ The halt of public welfare expansion left not only the field of casework largely untouched, but left a number of opportunities for agencies to supplement inadequate or non-existent programs. Moreover, general attitudes toward private effort had been rehabilitated through the efforts of popular wartime voluntary agencies operating through the USO. Private family agencies’ charitable origins, and the helping impulse of most of their workers put pressure on them to reintegrate themselves into a new welfare system. On the other hand, institutional survival and professional ambitions also encouraged looking further afield to the working and middle classes, to disentangle their techniques from charity and sell casework as a service. Postwar anxiety about the stability of families would amplify the desire for such service, pulling private agencies further away from their connection to the poor.

⁴⁰⁴ Ewan Clague, “Financing Postwar Welfare,” *Survey Midmonthly* (Feb. 1945): 47; Arch Mandel, “Accent on Quality,” *Highlights* (May 1945): 41-43.

CHAPTER FOUR: SELLING SERVICE, DEFENDING WELFARE

Introduction

Frances Levinson, Assistant Director of the private Jewish Social Service Association of New York City, asked a Baltimore audience in early 1947, "How to help people know that family problems are universal in nature and do not have to eventuate in economic difficulty, child delinquency, family separation, before help is available?" One answer, she explained to the room full of social workers and board members of local social agencies, is to "extend the use of family case work through making it a purchasable commodity and educating referral sources."⁴⁰⁵ Social service would no longer be simply for the poor, but a resource for all classes. Baltimore's social agencies were anxious to hear her thoughts—her agency had pioneered casework counseling for the middle classes, and the agencies in Baltimore were under pressure to do the same. It was not only private agencies that sensed the chance to extend such services to new clients. Several months earlier, at the annual meeting of the American Public Welfare Association, Joseph Baldwin, the local public welfare administrator of Lake County, Indiana, articulated similar hopes, forecasting "broadened concepts of public welfare services to include counseling for all kinds of people."⁴⁰⁶

Levinson's prescription for selling service became one of the central strategies for private casework agencies to reposition themselves in the landscape of post-New Deal social welfare, as they sought a clientele for their offerings since the poor no longer had

⁴⁰⁵ Frances Levinson, "The Interpretation of Case Work to Attract New Groups," *The Councilor* (March-April 1947): 41. Levinson spoke to the Division of Family and Child Care Agencies of the Baltimore Council of Social Agencies.

⁴⁰⁶ Kathryn Close, "It's Up to Us," *Survey Midmonthly* (January 1947): 12.

to depend on them. But private agencies were selling service in a broader sense as well, for they emerged at the center of efforts across the country to establish “therapeutic networks.” These were loosely affiliated local agencies, both public and private, that embraced psychologically oriented approaches to dealing with a host of social problems in the postwar era.⁴⁰⁷ For agencies such as Levinson’s, those approaches centered on social casework. Ethelda Mullen, executive director of the private Family Society of Wilmington, Delaware, described case work in 1949 to her board of directors as “a two-way flow between the individual and the case worker -- an interview in which the professional skill of the worker is purposefully used in helping the individual to understand or to accept the frustrations which are confusing him and to change or modify his own attitudes toward them....”⁴⁰⁸ Private agencies would engage in a variety of strategies to “sell” their services to a number of different parties: their own boards of directors, other local social agencies, and the general public. They found the glimmer of a market, and sometimes pressing demand, for their new style of giving.

Joseph Baldwin, the public welfare administrator, hoped to incorporate such techniques into his agency, to strengthen public welfare in the eyes of the public and within the social work profession, and to make welfare a more universal concept. But the infusion of counseling services into welfare, either for recipients of public assistance or mainstream clients, was not a given, and in fact was explicitly rejected in the immediate postwar era. In a series of highly publicized investigations of public welfare in 1947, which this chapter will explore, the therapeutic efforts of social workers were specifically singled out for criticism. Despite the hopes of social work professionals such as Joseph

⁴⁰⁷ Andrew J. Polsky, *The Rise of the Therapeutic State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 79, notes the emergence of “service networks” with similar contours and focus on a therapeutic impulse in the Progressive Era. I believe the post-World War Two period is a more accurate place to find such networks widespread and focused on professional therapeutic expertise.

⁴⁰⁸ Executive Director’s Report, Family Society of Wilmington, Feb. 15, 1949, Children and Families First Library, Wilmington, DE.

Baldwin in public welfare, few people saw therapeutic social work as a legitimate extension of public assistance in the late 1940s.⁴⁰⁹

The controversies surrounding social work practice in public welfare were part of what became a steady chorus of criticism of public assistance that started in the immediate postwar era. As one study observed, “For ADC [Aid to Dependent Children] the late forties were remarkable for the inception of violent and pervasive attacks....”⁴¹⁰ This chapter will emphasize how tenuous public assistance appeared to many in the voluntary sector in the postwar era. Though public assistance was less controversial than it would be by the 1960s, it was clear even by the late 1940s that programs such as ADC were unpopular, and suffered from bad publicity and consistently low levels of funding relative to the needs of its recipients. For private family agencies moving to embrace casework counseling as their core mission, the troubles of public welfare both aided and weakened their efforts. Critiques of counseling in public assistance were often accompanied by praise of such efforts in voluntary agencies, and served to augment the image of voluntary agencies as skilled providers of therapeutic services. On the other hand, for voluntary agencies to offer such services, they had to be able to point to a basic financial safety net provided by the public sector. Without it, voluntary agencies were pulled back toward welfare provision instead of offering service. Many voluntary agencies thus found themselves becoming reluctant participants in the political arena, arguing for higher public assistance standards while distinguishing their own work from that of welfare agencies.

⁴⁰⁹On social work professionals and public welfare services, see Polsky. On the tangled history of “services,” see Martha Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending for Social Services Grants* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1975) and Charles Gilbert, “Policy-Making in Public Welfare: The 1962 Amendments,” *Political Science Quarterly* (June 1966): 196-224. On the increasing orientation of counseling services toward rehabilitating welfare clients in the postwar era, see Jennifer Mittelstadt, “The Dilemmas of the Liberal Welfare State, 1945-1964: Gender, Race, and Aid to Dependent Children,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2000).

⁴¹⁰ Winifred Bell, *Aid to Dependent Children* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 60

Therapeutic Networks

For both private and public efforts at increasing the use of casework for the nonpoor, the general boost given psychological counseling in the military during World War Two set the tone for a plausible sell of therapy to “normal” populations. Private family agencies were at the heart of interagency social service alliances, or “therapeutic networks,” in the postwar period. Therapeutic networks were anchored by psychiatric expertise, but in the postwar period a variety of helping professions converged upon therapeutic techniques or insights as central elements of their own professional practices. Clinical psychologists, enjoying a boost to their professional legitimacy through their wartime military service, rapidly gained ground within the psychological profession, expanding beyond the profession’s base in behavioral and psychometric research. Social work education, as has been discussed, had emphasized insights from psychotherapy, particularly psychoanalysis, since the 1920s. Public investment in both psychiatric and psychological professional training expanded the number of therapeutic personnel in the United States in the decade following World War Two. The passage of the National Mental Health Act in 1947 provided millions of dollars for psychiatric training to a profession that was rapidly moving outside of its roots in state mental hospitals; by 1947, over half of psychiatrists were working in private practice or outpatient clinics, a 50 percent increase from 1940. Similarly, clinical psychologists benefited from investments in professional education made by the Veteran’s Administration and the Public Health Service following the war, to the point where by the mid-1950s, clinical psychologists

dominated the membership of the American Psychological Association.⁴¹¹ As the mental health establishment became more elaborated in the postwar era, institutional divisions and professional hierarchies would divide more than unite such communities. Even in this early period, differences in professional training often coincided with a gendered division of labor, with largely male psychiatrists holding positions of highest authority, responsibility, and pay, while mostly female social workers occupying the lower rungs of professional mental health provision.⁴¹²

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that these institutions and professions that often competed could also see themselves as part of a larger common cause, particularly as mental health gained prominence in public policy in the post World War Two era. They shared a common language and fundamental belief in the centrality of individual adjustment for coping with larger social and economic problems. By the late 1960s, one scholar would identify this common therapeutic orientation as the “fifth profession,” sharing a practice of psychodynamic psychotherapy practiced by psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers alike.⁴¹³ While the competition between professions, particularly in national, professional literature, appears vicious, in local practice, and particularly in areas where professional representation was less dense, collaboration tended to be more frequent—particularly in mental health clinics that

⁴¹¹ Nathan Hale Jr., *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 246; James Capshew, *Psychologists on the March: Science, Practice, and Professional Identity in America, 1929-1969* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 171-174.

⁴¹² Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 38-45.

⁴¹³ William Henry, John H. Sims, S. Lee Spray. *Public and Private Lives of Psychotherapists* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1973), p. 39-41.

employed psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychiatric social workers as part of a team.⁴¹⁴

The voluntary sector, to an extent that has been under-appreciated by historians, provided a critical avenue of expansion for such services beyond their medical and military roots. Family service agencies, for a period lasting from the end of World War Two until the passage of the Community Mental Health Act in 1963, served as key institutions in the extension of mental health services to “normal” populations. FSAA field reports reveal networks of agencies operating through cross-referrals that increasingly identified casework counseling and psychiatric consultation as central community resources. For instance, the Family Service Association of San Diego was providing casework supervision to the local Jewish Family Service agency, which had no professional caseworkers, and took referrals from the public welfare department, the school guidance bureau, and the probation department. The Family Society of Des Moines had lent workers to a local convalescent home which had gone on to hire its own social worker; Scarsdale Community Service accepted referrals from the public schools and public health nurses; the Nutley, New Jersey, Social Service Bureau got a large number of cases from the Child Guidance division of local schools.⁴¹⁵ Moreover, the increasing practice by private family agencies of engaging psychiatric consultants (generally from nearby hospitals) for staff education and referral, further established private family agencies as a conduit for therapeutic expertise. In Cleveland, the

⁴¹⁴ Gerald Grob, *From Asylum to Community: Mental Health Policy in Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 107.

⁴¹⁵ Cora Rowzee to Linton Swift, Nov. 21, 1945; Frank Hertel to FSAA Executive Committee, Nov. 29, 1946; Hertel to Executive Committee, December 6, 1946; “Membership Application, Nutley Social Service Bureau,” June 5, 1947. Folder 12, Box 6, Family Service Association of America Records, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota.

Associated Charities (soon to be renamed the Family Service Association of Cleveland) was one of several voluntary groups that lobbied the local Welfare Federation for the expansion of psychiatric facilities in anticipation of returning servicemen with emotional disorders. When Western Reserve University established a Department of Psychiatry in 1947, it attracted several psychiatrists to the Cleveland area who the Family Service Association drew on for psychiatric consultation. While psychiatric authority was clearly a means to bolster the professional legitimacy of private casework agencies, it was also a result of their deep belief in a broad therapeutic project.⁴¹⁶

Therapeutic networks were often solidified by pre-existing systems of organization and referral within the voluntary sector. Most cities that raised charitable dollars through federated fundraising such as the Community Chest also generally had organized a Council of Social Agencies. The Councils were conceived of as research and planning organizations for the community's welfare services, with a heavy emphasis on voluntary institutions. Often times constituted as a part of the Community Chest, Councils played important coordinating roles within the voluntary sector and their recommendations were often backed by the power of the purse of the Chests. In the postwar era, Councils and Chests would play a central role in reorienting the voluntary sector toward counseling and therapy.

The case of Baltimore is illustrative. In the postwar era, key community figures perceived therapeutic and counseling resources to be effective tools to combat problems of marital instability and juvenile delinquency. Baltimore's school district had created a

⁴¹⁶ Florence T. Waite, *A Warm Friend for the Spirit: A History of the Family Service Association of Cleveland and its Forebears, 1830-1952* (Cleveland: Family Service Association of Cleveland, 1960): p. 359; Walkowitz, p. 203.

child guidance center, staffed by social workers, to deal with problem children. The Division of Juvenile Cases of the Circuit Court employed a full time psychiatrist and a probation staff of 15 caseworkers and was well networked into the voluntary institutions of Baltimore through the Social Service Exchange. As an article in a newsletter put out by the Baltimore Council of Social Agencies concluded, "the offense is usually symptomatic of maladjustment, the multiple causes of which are often found far upstream in the emotional make up and home life of the child." While the juvenile justice system's therapeutic orientation dated back to the Progressive Era, its connections to other social agencies revealed an increasingly systematic orientation toward diagnosing problems on the basis of emotional or psychological problems.⁴¹⁷

The court system also revealed another social problem in the waning days of World War Two and prescribed a therapeutic solution. Judge Joseph Sherbow of the Circuit Court, who had served as the president of Baltimore's Jewish Family and Children's Bureau, the Jewish community's private family agency, observed an increasing number of divorces coming across his docket in 1945, and worried that little effort seemed to have been made to bring the parties together. Noting the experience of the Jewish Social Service Bureau of New York, which had pioneered casework counseling as a fee-based service for the middle class, he asked the Baltimore Council of Social Agencies in 1946 to investigate the possibility of such a service in Baltimore. In a speech to the annual meeting of the Baltimore Family and Children's Service, Baltimore's non-sectarian FSAA agency, Sherbow urged a service staffed by two or three caseworkers and a good psychiatrist. The office should be in a different place from the

⁴¹⁷ Charles E. Moylan, "The Use of Psychiatric Facilities and Social Investigations by the Circuit Court, Division for Juvenile Cases," *The Councilor* (June 1949): 14-20; Polsky, 65-76.

existing agencies, and should charge a fee, "The amount of which does not have to be too important." A new office and fee charging would indicate that social work counseling (aided by the authority of the psychiatrist) was not connected with charity, and was a new preventative service aimed at the middle class.⁴¹⁸ Sherbow's therapeutic orientation from the bench was not unusual; a number of cities and states, following the model of the juvenile court, folded social agency functions directly into new "family courts" that diagnosed marital problems as a form of illness, and that promoted counseling and reconciliation.⁴¹⁹

Prodded by Sherbow, the Council of Social Agencies then turned to the three private family agencies in Baltimore, Family and Children's Service, Bureau of Catholic Charities and the Jewish agency, and asked them to consider setting up a new office for marriage counseling. The proposal by the local Red Cross chapter and the local Planned Parenthood association to set up such a service also piqued the family agencies' attention. None of the three were enthusiastic about the idea of creating an entirely new, jointly run center, and the Catholic group eventually declined to participate. The Jewish agency was trying to hire social workers with better professional training, and demurred until their staffing was complete. The Family and Children's Service pointed out that they routinely saw marriage counseling cases, had dealt with 400 cases with marriage problems, and applications for that service had increased 14 percent per year since the middle of the war. They too faced staffing shortages but agreed to advertise themselves to the local

⁴¹⁸ Baltimore Council of Social Agencies, "Report of Committee on Judge Sherbow's Letter," Aug. 23, 1946, Folder 30, Box 9; Case Committee Records, Apr. 14, 1947; Minutes, Annual Meeting, Feb. 24, 1949, Folder 29, Box 5, Family and Children's Society of Baltimore (FCSB) Records, Special Collections, Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University.

⁴¹⁹ J. Herbie DiFonzo, *Beneath the Fault Line: The Popular and Legal Culture of Divorce in Twentieth Century America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), p. 114-125.

judiciary as a counseling resource. Some judges thought counseling was too little, too late by the time families reached the courts, but others noted the service with approval and promised references.⁴²⁰ Baltimore's case was not unusual. The Family Service Organization of Louisville, Kentucky (an FSAA casework agency) had participated in the planning of the local Domestic Relations Court, and lent a caseworker to the Court to see if it was a possible source of referrals to the agency. The FSA halted the relationship in 1951, deeming few of the clients "amenable to casework service"—but the court went on to hire the FSO worker part time for its own use.⁴²¹

Family and Children's Service of Baltimore, through its child services division, was enmeshed in the therapeutic network in other ways as well. For cases determined to be too serious for casework counseling, the agency routinely located psychiatric resources for children, whether by referring them to increasingly specialized institutions or consulting with local psychiatrists. In 1949, under urging from the Council of Social Agencies, the agency established a specialized foster care division for emotionally disturbed children, whose needs, the Council determined, were not being met by Baltimore. Most of the children cared for by this service were referred by the children's services of the public welfare departments of Baltimore and Ann Arundel County, which subsidized their care in the private agency.⁴²²

Such networks were not peculiar to Baltimore. Popular sources in the postwar era

⁴²⁰ Minutes, Advisory Committee on the Need for Additional Counseling Service, Feb. 28, 1947, Folder 30, Box 9; Board of Managers Minutes, Apr. 17, 1947, Folder 27, Box 5; Florence Silverblatt to Miriam Hurwich, May 3 [1947], Folder 30, Box 9; W. Conwell Smith to Clark Mock, Nov. 12, 1947, Folder 30, Box 9; Case Committee, May 5, 1949, Folder 1, Box 7, FCSB.

⁴²¹ Sherwin L. Spero and Raymond F. Blackard, "An Analysis of the Intake Department of the Family Service Organization of Louisville, Kentucky, 1948-1954" (MSW, University of Louisville, 1955), p. 19-23.

⁴²² Board of Managers, FCSB, Mar. 27, 1947; June 24, 1948, Box 5; "Historical Review of Specialized Foster Family Care for Emotionally Disturbed Children," Folder 7, Box 3, FSCB.

reflected the emergence and variety of these therapeutic networks. As an article on child guidance in 1950 noted, twenty years earlier, the public was “not as tolerant toward emotional problems as it is today,” and that institutional help meant mostly the mentally ill or criminal; few were equipped to help “average families.” In 1950, the article observed, child guidance was available from a variety of institutions, including voluntary children’s and family service agencies, hospitals, and juvenile courts—the article singled out FSAA-affiliated family agencies as one example.⁴²³

While therapeutic networks extolled the virtues of expert casework and therapy and promoted their use, some institutions and clients were not always amenable to the types of adjustment such agencies offered. The case of the Louisville Family Service Organization lends one example. During World War II, as with many agencies, the Louisville FSO began searching for new outlets for their services, establishing “outpost” services in seven local agencies: the Legal Aid Society, Selective Service boards, a sanatorium, the Crime Prevention Bureau, the King’s Daughter’s Home for Incurables, and two segregated day nurseries, the East End Day Nursery (black) and the Neighborhood Day Nursery (white). The program continued postwar with two institutions, the East End nursery and the King’s Daughter’s Home. While the King’s Daughter’s home hired a medical social worker after the FSO worker had demonstrated the usefulness of casework, the relationship with the East End Nursery ended on a different note in 1949. It turned out that nursery had accepted the services of the FSO only under pressure from Community Chest, the business-dominated private fundraising

⁴²³ Marie L. Coleman, “New Help With Family Problems,” *Parents Magazine* (April, 1950): 59. It also noted, though, the paucity of such institutions in rural areas and advised that people seeking to establish such services might begin with investigating the provisions of the National Mental Health Act.

organization from which it derived most of its funding. The East End board and particularly its president objected to working with the FSO and “consistently interfered with the effectiveness of the agency’s service.” A racial subtext most likely underlay this conflict between the white FSO and Community Chest with the black day nursery. Casework in nurseries during the war often consisted of discouraging mothers from leaving their families in order to work, but black mothers often had few choices but to do so. The East End board undoubtedly resented having to take on white caseworkers to discourage black people from using the resource they had been established to provide.⁴²⁴

Local family agencies were not only selling their competency to other agencies. Perhaps their most concerted efforts were selling their services to themselves, or more specifically, to their boards of directors. In so doing, they began to establish the legitimacy of social casework among local elites, from which agency boards were usually drawn. The in-house literature and social work literature in general, exhibited a running theme throughout this period about improving board-staff communications in charitable agencies. This was partly a result of unionization drives by agency personnel in the 1930s and 1940s, but also to a broader problem of the professional practices of social workers becoming distant from the experiences of their lay boards.⁴²⁵ In Baltimore in the late 1940s, the Jewish Family and Children’s Bureau was painfully extricating itself from its historic function as a welfare agency. A number of the agency’s board of directors “indicated uncertainty about the substance of counseling service as a substitute for our

⁴²⁴ For differing racial attitudes on day care, and on use of case work to discourage mothers from using day care, see Elizabeth Rose, *A Mother’s Job: The History of Day Care, 1890-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 143-144, 153-158.

⁴²⁵ Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 220; Walkowitz, ch. 4-6.

previous clear role as a relief giving agency.” But with the momentum clearly shifting to counseling, the board hired a consultant to come evaluate the agency’s casework, which she found lacking. When one board member questioned the consultant’s evaluation, she turned on him and, with supreme lack of diplomacy, informed him that his question revealed that the Board itself had only a partial understanding of what professional casework consisted of.⁴²⁶ Elsewhere, even sympathetic board members warned agency staffs that “We Take a Lot on Faith”; as one board member of a family agency wrote, in reports from social work staff, the board member “sees the family restored to self-respect, adjusted to society and, from a social point of view, cured. About the time the layman, reading these generalized and optimistic claims, begins to ask himself, ‘Come now, can they really do all this?’...”⁴²⁷

The FSAA began paying specific attention to the issue of bringing their boards on board a program centered on counseling rather than traditional charity. Family Service of Milwaukee, for example, ran “Case Discussion Groups,” using case material from agency files as the basis for meetings with board members to talk about casework approaches to problems. Omaha Family Service’s board members had information sessions with the psychiatric consultant who worked with the agency’s professional staff. FSAA field workers looked specifically at the boards of agencies applying for membership to determine board attitudes toward casework. Membership often turned on whether or not, as in the case of the Family Welfare Association of New Britain, the board’s “leadership is now being developed through active participation.” The best boards, from the FSAA standpoint, were those such as in the Family Society of Fairmont, West Virginia, where

⁴²⁶ Minutes, Board of Directors, Jewish Family and Children’s Bureau of Baltimore,

⁴²⁷ Barklie Henry, “We Take a Lot on Faith,” *Survey Midmonthly* (November 1940): 320.

the "Board has stood firmly behind the agency program of service."⁴²⁸

Finally, agencies had to sell their services to a broader public from which they hoped to draw clients. Their effort, focusing on family counseling, was aided by generalized social anxiety following the war about the stability of family relationships and traditional gender roles, driven both by increased participation by women in the workforce and a sharp rise in the divorce rate following the war.⁴²⁹ Judge Sherbow's efforts to promote marriage counseling in Baltimore are one illustration of those worries. Popular outlets of all varieties drummed up worries about the strength of the family, often, as in the case of the 1949 newsreel "Marriage and Divorce," laying the blame at women working outside the home. The narrator encouraged people to talk about their marriage problems with experts, though in this particular instance, he pointed to the family doctor as somebody who could also discuss personal problems.⁴³⁰ These economic and cultural shifts made middle class families more receptive to reaching out to the aid of social agencies, and particularly those that offered a therapeutic solution. Such worries were manifest in many voluntary agencies, particularly maternity homes for pregnant, unmarried young women. Single pregnant daughters, visible signs of family "failure," drove many middle class families to maternity homes, previously the domain of poorer

⁴²⁸ Roy Dulak, "Milwaukee's Experience with Case Discussion Groups," *Highlights* (October 1946): 86-88; Helen Ross and Adelaide Johnson, "The Growing Science of Casework," *Journal of Social Casework* (November 1946): 278; George Landis, "History of the Family Service of Omaha," (MSW, University of Nebraska, 1948), p. 53. See also Peter Dobkin Hall, "Resolving the Dilemmas of Democratic Governance: The Historical Development of Trusteeship in America, 1636-1996," in Ellen C. Lagemann, *Philanthropic Foundations: New Scholarship, New Possibilities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999): 29-31. Hertel to FSAA Executive Committee, December 6, 1946; FSAA Executive Committee Minutes, December 8, 1950, Folder 12, Box 6, FSAA Records.

⁴²⁹ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

⁴³⁰ "Marriage and Divorce," *The March of Time* (Time Inc.; McGraw-Hill Text-Films, 1949), Iowa State University Film Archives.

clients. Such agencies offered refuge for better-off families from increasingly rigid public norms about families, lest private problems be exposed to public comment.⁴³¹

Class dynamics also influenced the promotion of psychological counseling in such agencies. As social workers in maternity homes faced increasing numbers of middle class clients, their diagnoses shifted to reflect those changes. Pregnant middle class girls were more likely to be deemed emotionally unstable, whereas poorer girls were viewed as the product of a pathologically deviant culture.⁴³²

But family service agencies had to sell their services in a way that maternity homes did not. While unmarried pregnancy presented a physical and immediate problem that could literally be hidden in a maternity home, family agencies needed to convince clients that they could help solve less tangible problems, such as dissatisfaction in marriage, sexual dysfunction, and parent-child conflict. To do so, FSAA marriage counseling was firmly in line with postwar family norms, focusing on promoting understanding and improving communication between spouses, but ultimately reinforcing traditional family structures and gender roles. Keeping marriages together was the first priority. As one social worker that studied the Boston Family Society's marriage counseling practice wrote, while clients may come on the verge of divorce, "it would only give temporary relief to basic emotional difficulties which marriage has brought to the surface."⁴³³

⁴³¹ Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Routledge, 2000): p. 93.

⁴³² Regina Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 145-155.

⁴³³ Victor R. Lee, "A Study of the Function of the Family Society as a Marriage Counseling Agency," (MSW, Boston University, 1951), p. 19.

Agencies had to lean heavily on the appeal of their experts to generate interest. Counseling through an FSAA affiliate, said one men's magazine, was professional and nothing to be ashamed of: "Counselors are professionally trained to spot and to make people see the roots of their trouble. You should have no more hesitation about getting this type of assistance than about seeing your doctor when you need medical attention."⁴³⁴ As a number of scholars have demonstrated, the period between the end of World War Two and the 1960s was a high point of faith in scientific expertise in American culture and politics. The prominent role of scientists in work on the atomic bomb, and continuing demands for scientific research to fight the Cold War, gave scientists heightened cultural authority and concrete political support for expanding professional enterprises in a variety of disciplines.⁴³⁵

Social workers sought to build on the increasing centrality of expertise in American life. While professionalization was a decades-old phenomena in social work, the postwar era offered the first opportunity to offer the profession's core services—casework—as a commodity on its own, rather than as an auxiliary service to distributing material relief. Thus, it was no surprise that professionalization was strongest in private agencies. Casework was, FSAA executive director Frank Hertel assured the House Ways and Means Committee, a "very skilled process."⁴³⁶ A study in Los Angeles in the late 1940s revealed that while private agencies employed only 23 percent of the social workers in the region, they employed 74 percent of the caseworkers with one or

⁴³⁴ Leonard Reed, "Your Marriage Can Last!" *Pic* (Nov. 1947): 106.

⁴³⁵ Brian Balogh, *Chain Reaction: Expert Debate and Public Participation in American Commercial and Nuclear Power, 1945-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 12-14.

⁴³⁶ Congress, House, Committee on Ways and Means, *Social Security Amendments of 1949*, 81st. Cong., 1st sess., March 1949, p. 934.

more years of professional training.⁴³⁷ The close relationship between private agencies, schools of social work, and the *Journal of Social Casework* placed private agency personnel in the heart of the professional project in social work.

Part of that project involved ideological and regulatory efforts to exclude unlicensed mental health practitioners from gaining public legitimacy—a classic signal of a profession attempting to establish itself and its market.⁴³⁸ At the end of the war, trained experts and social agencies worried about the vulnerability of the swarm of returning servicemen facing the psychic dislocations of readjusting to civilian life. Psychiatric social worker Lee Steiner had researched unlicensed counselors in the 1930s. Her book, *Where Do People Take Their Troubles?* (1945) warned of the range of characters, from mediums to newspaper columnists, who sought to exploit a growing willingness by people to discuss their personal problems with experts. An increasingly therapeutic military establishment reissued Steiner's book for G.I.s late in the war. Similar worries fueled a swarm of advice pamphlets in the postwar era. The inclusion of therapy among the more traditional temptations of get-rich-quick schemes and offers of Florida plantations marked the rapid legitimization of therapy and its emergence as a commodity. Harold Seashore's *All of Us Have Troubles* (1947) observed that among many problems one might face, including planning for a career, maintaining a satisfying marriage, or "readjusting your personality so as to make yourself more acceptable to others and more contented with yourself," most could be aided with expert help. Seashore (whose book

⁴³⁷ Ernest V. Hollis and Alice L. Taylor, *Social Work Education in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 94-95; on the commodification of social work, see Stanley Wenocur and Micheal Reisch, *From Charity to Enterprise: The Development of Social Work in a Market Economy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

⁴³⁸ Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 14.

was published by the Young Men's Christian Association of America) promised to help distinguish between the quacks and the qualified. It concluded with an illustration of a young man walking down a hallway of charlatans, ranging from "astronomer" to "palmist" to "photo analyst" to "consulting psychologist", and assured young men not to be afraid of "legitimate psychologists and counselors, but beware of the phonies." Other popular sources, reflecting the emergence of psychology as a common cultural reference point as well as the rising appeal of expertise, warned the emotionally vulnerable to discern between professional and poseur. *McCalls* advised to do a thorough credential check "When You Don't Know Where to Turn" for emotional guidance.⁴³⁹

Professional therapists in a range of institutions took more concrete measures to police the professional boundaries of therapeutic networks. Promoting licensure laws for psychologists was the primary avenue of action. A study in Los Angeles in 1948 found that only three of 53 people advertising themselves as clinical psychologists had reasonable professional training, and concluded that clients were probably being harmed or at least recovering from their problems "in spite of their clinicians, rather than because of them, despite the payment of rather high fees." The American Psychological Association convened a conference in 1949 to discuss state legislation for licensure. Nonetheless, the *Columbia Law Review* warned in 1951 that existing legislation for

⁴³⁹ Lee Steiner, *Where Do People Take Their Troubles?* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1945; New York: Editions for the Armed Services, 1945); Harold Seashore, *All of Us Have Troubles* (New York: Association Press, 1947), p. 5-7, 50; William Trufant Foster warned G.I.s in *Gyps and Swindles* Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 109 (New York: Public Affairs Committee, 1945); Albert O. Maisel, "When You Don't Know Where to Turn," *McCalls* (February, 1949): 20-21, 98-102. See Herman and Capshew for use of psychology in military, and Chris Loss, "'The Best-Informed Soldier in the World': Adjustment, Education, and the 1944 GI Bill of Rights," (unpublished ms., University of Virginia, 2001) and Peter Sheehy, "Training Troops in Groups: The Rise of Group Psychotherapy, Democratic Morale, and Therapeutic Culture," (unpublished ms., University of Virginia, 2001) on the therapeutic orientation of the military.

licensing therapists “may not prove wholly adequate” to sift out the unscrupulous.⁴⁴⁰

In San Diego, the local Family Service Association was a key activist in helping secure municipal regulation of personal counseling. The local Mental Health Association had gathered information on perceived abuses of the city’s business licenses by “psycho quacks,” and approached a sympathetic editor at the *San Diego Daily Journal*. The paper ran a series of articles exposing the “mental doctor racket” which helped produce a city ordinance requiring a board with three members of the American Psychological Association to pass on applications for personal counseling. The FSA received prominent mention in the coverage as a legitimate source of personal counseling, and the District Attorney, a board member of the FSA, noted his connection to the agency in his public statements.⁴⁴¹

The FSAA national office initiated a Public Relations Department in 1947 to help local agencies plan publicity efforts and to arrange for them to take part in national programs such as “Marriage for Millions,” a series of fifteen-minute radio programs produced by NBC and run as public service announcements, each of which presented “a dramatized case story of an actual marriage problem brought to a family service agency.”⁴⁴² FSAA executives and caseworkers became frequent sources for popular

⁴⁴⁰ Edward J. Shoben, “Private Clinicians in Los Angeles,” *American Psychologist* (April 1948): 127-132; John G. Peatman, “The Problem of Protecting the Public By Appropriate Legislation for the Practice of Psychology,” *American Psychologist* (April 1950): 102-108; “Regulation of Psychological Counseling and Psychotherapy,” *Columbia Law Review* 51 (1951): 474-495.

⁴⁴¹ “Fake Mental Doctor Bared in S.D.,” *San Diego Daily Journal*, June 9, 1948; “Keller Probes Psycho Quacks, Cites Need for Legal Weapon,” *Daily Journal*, [June, 1948]; “Welfare Group Asks Quack License Ban,” *Daily Journal* [June 1948] in Folder “San Diego Family Service, 1948-1949,” Box 36, FSAA Records. The latter article featured a picture of “S.D. Veterans Learn Facts on Mental Quacks.” Nevin Wiley, “San Diego Outlaws the Psycho Quacks,” *Highlights* (Nov. 1948): 146-147; Maisel, p. 98, 101.

⁴⁴² Hertel, “FSAA Establishes Public Relations Service,” *Highlights* (Oct. 1947): 115-117; “Marriage for Millions,” *Highlights* (October 1948): 125-128. Walkowitz argues that the process of selling service by private agencies was also driven, in part, by the hardening of social workers’ own middle class identity;

magazine articles on marriage, divorce, and problems with children, alongside academics, judges from juvenile and family courts, and psychiatrists.⁴⁴³ New York's Community Service Society (the largest private family agency in the country), close to the editorial offices of many national magazines, was a particularly common source for expertise. *Women's Home Companion* described the CSS as doing "one of the most intense jobs of family service in the United States. Its eleven district offices last year helped iron out the kinks in twelve thousand, nine hundred and eighty four families with a total of sixteen thousand, nine hundred and two children."⁴⁴⁴ Moreover, an FSAA study on marriage and divorce, issued in 1946, was cited frequently as evidence of problems among American families. The study showed the "immaturity" of many people entering marriage and traced 53 percent of delinquents to "broken homes."⁴⁴⁵

Thanks to the efforts of the publicity department, popular coverage of family problems often included examples from family casework agencies. Not only did they profile the prowess of agency social workers, but they also heartily partook in the tendency to focus on mothers and women as the source of psychological problems—and as the most likely clients. As many scholars have noted, the popularity of Freudian thought in the immediate postwar era—which deeply influenced social casework—made the home environment, and particularly mothers, the first place for many therapists to

once convinced of their own position in the middle class, they felt surer about offering their services to better-off clients. Walkowitz, p. 204. I argue that institutional imperatives (particularly declining caseloads), as well as a growing cultural embrace of therapy, also drove this process.

⁴⁴³ Jean L. Block, "Unmasking the Other Woman," *Pageant* (Aug. 1950): 73; "Lost!" *True Story* (Oct. 1949): 154.

⁴⁴⁴ Whitman, p. 4; Ruth Brindze, "Living With Another Family," *Journal of Living* (Mar. 1948): 24-28.

⁴⁴⁵ "The American Family in Trouble," *Life* (July 28, 1948): 93; David Wittels, "The Children Are the Losers," *Saturday Evening Post* (Feb. 11, 1950): 33.

turn to discern the roots of maladjustment.⁴⁴⁶ A *McCalls* article on truancy brought up the example of “Gilbert,” an 11-year old in New York, a good student who began to miss school. His mother contacted the Community Service Society of New York—an FSAA member and the largest private family agency in the country—as the magazine described it, who sent a caseworker to the home to talk with the mother. The diagnosis: an overprotective mother who supervised Gilbert too closely. He was skipping school to play with friends outside his mother’s supervision. After the CSS caseworker talked with the mother, the mother agreed to “relax,” and Gilbert returned to school. The same article looked at the case of “Dick”, whose father had died and whose mother worked, and whose school problems were interpreted by a caseworker by Dick being “starved for mother love.”⁴⁴⁷ Similarly, while Anna Kempshall of the CSS warned not to blame mothers too much for their children’s problems, the same article quoted Dorothy Thomas of the Washington Family Service Association that, “Ten per cent invested in the parents brings a hundred per cent return for the child.”⁴⁴⁸ Child rearing was not the only focus of such coverage. Anne Beattie, educational secretary for Cleveland Family Service Association, advised a reporter writing on “What Does He Want in a Wife?” that women should not dwell exclusively on housework: “In our sixty-five years’ experience in

⁴⁴⁶ Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umanski, *‘Bad’ Mothers: The Politics of Blame in Twentieth Century United States* (New York: NYU Press, 1998), p. 12-17.

⁴⁴⁷ Benjamin Fine, “Why Do They Play Hooky?”, *McCalls* (March, 1948): 134-138; Family Welfare Association of America, “Report of the Committee on Marriage Counseling,” Sept., 1943, Folder 9, Box 10, FSAA Records; a critique of family case work’s promotion of patriarchal family structures is in Henry S. Maas, “*Family Casework Diagnosis: An Essay Review*,” *Social Service Review* (December, 1962): 444-450.

⁴⁴⁸ Howard Whitman, “Let’s Stop Blaming the Parents,” *Women’s Home Companion* (Sept. 1949): 4, 160.

counseling thousands of families, we find that the woman who makes a fetish of a clean house is often frigid at heart.”⁴⁴⁹

Local agencies worked to develop stories with reporters from local newspapers, and the national office held up their efforts as examples for other agencies. Dorothy Cason, executive director of Family Service of Miami, Florida, developed a Sunday feature on “Miami’s Typical Unwed Mother” with a *Miami Herald* reporter. Some agencies, such as the Cleveland Family Service Association, drew in newspaper editors and reporters as board members or advisors. A.C. Burch, associate editor of the *Cleveland Press*, was an FSA board member in the early 1940s, and Todd Simon, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*’s welfare reporter, had close ties to the FSA.⁴⁵⁰

Family agencies took on direct educational efforts as well. A third of FSAA members reported undertaking some sort of “family life education” in 1947-1948, which they saw not only as preventative education but also as a chance to publicize the work of their agencies in counseling programs. Attendance at programs run by the Jewish Family Service Agency of St. Louis lectures in 1947 ranged from 500 to 600 people. As a study of a program run by the non-sectarian Family Service of St. Louis reported, the “agency’s experience has shown that when a group of people who are interested know what the Agency can offer, they can and do bring in others to the projects.”⁴⁵¹ Though the publicity value was high, and the nature of family life education seemed to dovetail with family agencies’ increasing emphasis on family counseling, such educational programs were

⁴⁴⁹ Louise Bruner, “What Does He Want in a Wife?” *Your Life* (Feb. 1950): 66.

⁴⁵⁰ Dorothy Cason, “New Methods of Interpretation,” *Highlights* (Jan. 1947): 1-4; Waite, p. 359.

⁴⁵¹ Mrs. Alfred Schwartz, “Education for Happy Family Living,” *Highlights* (June 1947): 81-83; Helen S. Hunnicut, “Development of a Family Life Education Program by the Family Service Society of St. Louis County: January 1949-May 1950.” (MSW, Washington University, 1951): 20, 70.

often a subject of intense debate within these agencies, since they did not involve the one-on-one relationships caseworkers expected to conduct. They could also be time-consuming for agencies still struggling to maintain staffs amid a general shortage of social workers. The Cleveland FSA, after a year of committee study, agreed that family life education was central to the agency's mission, but a full program proved impossible well into the 1950s due to a lack of staff.⁴⁵²

The local efforts of private agencies to promote casework and to build networks of social service agencies became a blueprint for postwar public-private service provision. At the center of these efforts to create a template from private agency action was Community Research Associates, a consulting company headed by Bradley Buell, a social worker most closely associated with Community Chests and Councils, Inc., the national association of local charitable fundraising organizations.⁴⁵³ Two key early associates of Buell's were prominent private agency executives: A. A. Heckman of the Family Service of St. Paul, Minnesota, and Paul Beisser, head of the Henry Watson Children's Aid Society in Baltimore and then the St. Louis Children's Society. Heckman and Beisser had collaborated with Buell in a late war survey of Syracuse, New York, supported by *Fortune* magazine, that had aimed at assessing the state of social welfare in that community. Their findings established the emerging consensus among private agencies about how a post-war public private divide in local services might appear. They embraced public social provision. Social security was critical, they argued, and

⁴⁵² Waite, p. 385-386.

⁴⁵³ Syracuse-Onondaga Post-War Planning Council, *Health, Welfare and Leisure Time Activities* (Syracuse Council of Social Agencies, 1944), Folder 7, Box 29, Community Research Associates Records, SWHA. "Blueprint for Middletown," *Survey Midmonthly* (October 1947): 285. Buell had run CCC Inc.'s survey division in the 1930s; he moved to become executive editor of *Survey Midmonthly* before leaving in 1947 to run Community Research Associates.

communities needed social insurance programs as well as more flexible general assistance policies to create a foundation of economic support. On top of this, however, was needed a generalized family case work agency, “with a well-trained staff, competent to insure an over-all diagnosis of any given family situation, the individual strengths and weaknesses of the children as well as the adults, and the fabric of their family life.” Ideally, they argued, it would be a non-sectarian agency open to all, and one that was clearly distinguished from public relief—in short, the vision that the Family Service Association of American had for its member agencies.⁴⁵⁴ Heckman and Buell would go on to conduct a series of influential studies in St. Paul that grew out of an identification of a hard-core set of “multi-problem families” that absorbed a disproportionate amount of community resources. The next chapter will explore this study at length, for coordinating service delivery to such families, around a core of casework, became the model that Community Research Associates promoted in a range of surveys and demonstration projects that had a deep impact on welfare policy in the early 1960s. But it is important to note that their perspective was decisively shaped in the late 1940s by the background of the principals in working in private casework agencies and in private welfare fundraising.

⁴⁵⁴ In Syracuse, Buell and Heckman found this job being performed by four private family agencies: the Family Society, the Catholic Charities, the Jewish Social Service Bureau, and the American Red Cross. Bradley Buell, “Everybody Benefits,” *Survey Midmonthly* (August, 1944): 216; Paul T. Beisser and A. A. Heckman, “Casework for the Whole Community,” *Survey Midmonthly* (November, 1944): 307-308; Heckman and Allan Stone, “Forging New Tools,” *Survey Midmonthly* (Oct. 1947): 268. *Fortune’s* sponsorship of the Syracuse survey is consistent with the magazine’s efforts to promote privately based social welfare in other arenas. See Edward Berkowitz and Kim McQuaid, *Creating the Welfare State: The Political Economy of Twentieth-Century Reform* (New York: Praeger, 1980), p. 136-137.

Public Welfare Therapy

Professional social workers in public agencies shared the same aspirations to put their professional skills to work at interpersonal counseling in the postwar era. As shown in the previous chapters, the World War Two home front featured a search by both voluntary agencies and some public welfare administrators to place casework counseling in the service of new social problems. Expansive views of casework in both the public and voluntary sector envisioned casework counseling liberated from the doling out of financial assistance and available to people of all classes. As evidence of such hope in federal welfare bureaucracies, the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill in 1945 that proposed to significantly widen the public welfare state included a provision that would empower social workers in public assistance agencies to offer their counseling services to all citizens—though both the provision and bill were short-lived. Casework “should not be limited to needy persons,” argued Bureau of Public Assistance chief Jane Hoey to the House Ways and Means Committee in 1949, but rather was an “expression of the general responsibility of the State to protect the interest of all its members....”⁴⁵⁵

Given the trajectory of the social work profession toward an increasingly therapeutic orientation, and the expanding market for counseling services, it might have seemed likely that the public welfare system might soon follow the path of private agencies toward counseling, and appropriate that function as they had taken over relief. The wartime experience and pronouncements of public welfare leaders certainly indicated such hopes. However, therapeutic work in public welfare was shoved off the

⁴⁵⁵ Judith Katz and Morris Zelditch, “Public Assistance Under the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill,” *Highlights* (Dec. 1945): 129-132; Martha Derthick, *The Influence of Federal Grants: Public Assistance in Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 266 n. 3; *Social Security Amendments of 1949*, p. 404.

public welfare agenda for two reasons: first, by controversies surrounding public assistance programs in the late 1940s, and second, by direct attacks on attempts by social workers to link therapeutic approaches to financial assistance. The relative expertise of voluntary institutions, by contrast, was heightened by the travails of public assistance.

In the first instance, many public welfare advocates had hoped that the categorical assistance established in 1935 would broaden in one of two ways: either social insurance coverage would expand to cover old age assistance, aid to the blind, and aid to dependent children; or, that broader assistance programs would be added, particularly a federally funded program of "general assistance" that would cover categories of the poor excluded from federal programs. Many states and localities ran their own general assistance programs, but they were often ill funded, and many areas lacked them entirely.⁴⁵⁶ Social Security was incrementally increasing but did not dent the numbers of categorical aid recipients. The ambitions of liberal policy makers and politicians to expand the welfare generally, particularly through the passage of national health insurance, were soundly defeated in the immediate postwar era, and a conservative Congress dismantled the most progressive elements of the New Deal, particularly those aimed at postwar planning. Efforts to create a federal general assistance program were defeated; little political support existed for expanding assistance in an era of relatively low unemployment.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ In 1959, 11 states and territories, nearly all southern, still had no general assistance program to families with an employable adult: Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Texas, the Virgin Islands, and West Virginia. Six others generally excluded such families with occasional emergency exceptions: Arizona, District of Columbia, Iowa, Maryland, Nevada, South Carolina. Winifred Bell, *Aid to Families With Dependent Children* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965): 203-204.

⁴⁵⁷ Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Knopf, 1995); Edwin Amenta, *Bold Relief: Institutional Politics and the Origins of Modern American Social Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 191-230.

The financial and political vulnerability of public assistance was thrown into sharper relief in 1947, when highly publicized investigations of public welfare in Baltimore and New York City created a nationwide backlash against welfare policies perceived to be ill-managed and open to fraud. This is an episode of protest against the welfare state that has been largely overlooked by historians of welfare.⁴⁵⁸ It was a sobering moment for welfare activists in both the public and private sectors. The investigation in Baltimore produced a report by the Commission on Government Efficiency and Economy in late 1947, an independent but business supported agency that played a watchdog role on city expenditures. In the midst of the report, which excoriated the management of the Baltimore Department of Public Welfare, the anonymous author noted, "there were disclosed other cases obviously in need of continuing rehabilitative social services such as the organized private social and religious agencies now perform and which, this Study has confirmed, should be strengthened and given wider and more substantial support by the community."⁴⁵⁹ While praising private social work, throughout the remainder of the report the author took public welfare social workers to task who embraced "unrealistic and sloppy humanitarianism and unsound psychology, and indicate little practical knowledge and experience with human traits.... The Department lays much emphasis upon the potential strengths of applicants and 'clients' and their capacities for 'growth to selfhood,' but generally does nothing to develop those strengths

⁴⁵⁸ James Patterson quotes headlines from the New York City controversy; see Patterson, p. 89-90. Daniel Walkowitz is one of the few scholars to give attention to the episode in New York, though again, his primary concern is less a history of welfare policy and more a study of middle class identity among social workers. See Walkowitz, 192-199. Winifred Bell, *Aid to Dependent Children*, gives the most detail on the late 1940s controversies, but the Baltimore episode in particular, though covered widely in national newspapers, has largely escaped attention from historians.

⁴⁵⁹ Commission on Government Efficiency and Economy, *The Department of Welfare, City of Baltimore* (Baltimore: Commission on Government Efficiency and Economy, Inc., December, 1947): 22.

beyond putting blind trust in their existence.”⁴⁶⁰ The Baltimore welfare crisis was a challenge not only to the city’s basic public assistance mechanisms, but a broadside attack on social work practice, particularly in public welfare.

The CGEE report in Baltimore marked nearly two years of crisis for the Baltimore Public Welfare Department. In early 1946, BDPW director Thomas Waxter pointed out that “since V-J day there has been a slow but constant increase in the number of cases eligible for public assistance,” resulting in a shortfall of over \$730,000. Between January 1945 and December 1946, ADC caseloads rose 122 percent, while general assistance rose 60 percent.⁴⁶¹ Since the city, state, and federal government shared the costs of ADC, and since general assistance was split between the city and state, Waxter’s requests set off months of wrangling in city government over the \$414,939 share of the shortage it would have to produce.⁴⁶² As OPA price restrictions were lifted that summer, Baltimore’s consumer price index rose 18.2 percent and 19.6 percent for food, and relief costs continued to climb. Waxter announced a 25 percent increase in food and clothing grants in that October.⁴⁶³ In early 1947 Waxter announced further cuts in the budgets of welfare clients, and simultaneously asked for an independent investigation of his department’s practices, in the hopes it would illustrate that real needs, and not

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁶¹ “City Relief \$733,281 Over Grant,” *Baltimore Morning Sun*, January 19, 1946; Benjamin Lyndon, “Relief Probes: A Study of Public Welfare Investigations in Baltimore, New York, and Detroit, 1947-1949,” (Ph.D. diss, University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration, 1953).

⁴⁶² While the appropriation was eventually approved, a public comment period brought out protests from representatives of two neighborhood improvement associations as well as the Czechoslovak Association who argued that welfare was supporting “too many loafers.” More significantly, Elmer Bernhardt, the chief of the City’s Payroll Office, which issued welfare checks, argued that the department was being run by “caseworkers without a concept of the value of a public dollar.” “Council O.K.’s Relief Loan of \$414,000,” *Baltimore Morning Sun*, March 30, 1946.

⁴⁶³ “Welfare Costs After OPA,” *Baltimore Evening Sun*, July 19, 1946; “City Raises Food Relief Grants 25%,” *Baltimore Sunday Sun*, Oct. 13, 1946; Lyndon, p. 23.

inefficiency, were at the heart of his department's budget crisis.⁴⁶⁴ However, that announcement coincided with a nine-article series on the Department of Welfare in the *Baltimore Morning Sun* in February by reporter Howard Norton. Norton's headlines blared that welfare recipients were defrauding the department, protected by laws governing client secrecy and coddled by a department that was uninterested in prosecuting abuses of the system. While throughout the coverage, the paper reasserted its support of welfare for the deserving, it left a deep-seated impression of a welfare system run by hopeless idealists and populated by chiselers.⁴⁶⁵ A steady stream of prosecutions in the wake of the investigation reinforced that impression. By the time the CGEE report was released in December 1947, New York City was in the throes of its own welfare crisis, with scandalized newspaper reports revealing welfare mothers with mink coats and welfare families being put up in "luxury" hotels. In both New York and Baltimore, the social workers who administered the day-to-day distribution of public assistance bore the brunt of the criticism. The two scandals cross-pollinated and heightened awareness of public assistance in the two cities.⁴⁶⁶ Critics of public welfare across the country seized on the Baltimore report as evidence of the malign influence of social workers and federal social welfare policy. Phil Vogt, the welfare administrator of the Douglas County, Nebraska told the *Omaha News-Herald* that the Baltimore report "is what I've been

⁴⁶⁴ "Probe Asked of Welfare Department," *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Jan. 30, 1947; Lyndon, p. 26.

⁴⁶⁵ "11 Million Dollars and How it is Spent," *Sunday Sun*, Feb. 9, 1947; "206 Fraud Cases: No Prosecutions," *Morning Sun*, Feb. 10, 1947; "When and If Is Seldom and Little," *Morning Sun*, Feb. 11, 1947; "How One Payment Brings Five More," *Morning Sun*, Feb. 12, 1947; "Who Says Who Gets Welfare Payments," *Morning Sun*, Feb. 13, 1947; "Who Cashes City's 3,069,101 Checks?" *Morning Sun*, Feb. 14, 1947; "A Business Without a Business Manager," *Morning Sun*, Feb. 15, 1947; "Monthly Advance Advances Costs," *Morning Sun*, Feb. 17, 1947; "Charity Begins -- In Washington," *Morning Sun*, Feb. 18, 1947.

⁴⁶⁶ "Lady in Mink' to Continue on Relief, But Will Hunt Job," *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Oct. 1, 1947; "Welfare Cost Rise Rouses Baltimore," *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1947.

trying to say here for two years.”⁴⁶⁷ Baltimore and New York were not isolated incidents, either. Donald Howard of the Russell Sage Foundation reported attacks on public welfare in 16 states in 1947.⁴⁶⁸

The controversies underscored the tenuousness of public acceptance of the public assistance programs of the New Deal welfare state. As the economy shifted into peacetime production and unemployment dropped, the continued presence, and increasing costs, of public assistance proved politically controversial. In the federally supported categories of Aid to Dependent Children and Old Age Assistance, states and localities retained the responsibility of setting standards and were required to supply a portion of the funding. Welfare directors like Waxter were forced to request budget appropriations from city councils and state legislatures on a yearly basis, so the program became more visible and invited more controversy than other welfare state programs such as Social Security.⁴⁶⁹ Public opinion in the postwar era tended to take a dim view of welfare expenditures in an era so markedly more prosperous than the 1930s. When articles such as Norton’s framed the issues in terms of expenditures and emphasized waste, it played to the negative stereotypes of welfare recipients and its administrators.⁴⁷⁰ In Baltimore, city business leaders respected Waxter personally as a man of integrity, but,

⁴⁶⁷ “A Study of Relief,” Omaha *Morning News-Herald*, December 12, 1947, p. 28. Vogt called for a similar study but glumly noted that most such surveys came back arguing for an *increase* rather than a decrease in welfare expenditures. Omaha was not noted for its generosity either — Family Service of Omaha, the local FSAA affiliate, noted a long-standing dispute with Vogt’s agency over the adequacy of relief grants, with the voluntary agency pushing for more spending by the public body. Landis, p. 56-57.

⁴⁶⁸ Donald Howard, “Public Assistance Returns to Page One,” *Social Work Journal* (April 1948): 47.

⁴⁶⁹ Robert Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 125.

⁴⁷⁰ James Patterson, *America’s Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1985* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 89-91.

as one friend later recalled, “some of them thought he was a screwball who would give the city away.”⁴⁷¹

Rising costs triggered the Baltimore controversy. Waxter portrayed the reasons for increased relief costs as a combination of the difficulty the aged, handicapped, and women were having finding jobs that had been plentiful during the war, and rising costs of living. The intensity of the initial conflict was also fueled by efforts by striking CIO unions in Baltimore in early 1946 to obtain public assistance for thousands of strikers—a request that Waxter denied, enforcing a prohibition on granting relief to “employable” persons in February 1946.⁴⁷² Most important may have been the shifting demographics and racial change in Baltimore. A contemporary study of the welfare crises in Baltimore and New York, and a similar episode in Detroit explained the controversy by pointing to the influx of poor blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Appalachian whites to those cities in the late 1940s. Waxter, the relatively liberal welfare chief, had combined his annual report in 1946 with an injunction against racial prejudice in the city.⁴⁷³ The race of welfare recipients was never mentioned in Norton’s *Sun* articles, but in the wave of fraud prosecutions that followed, the majority of cases were brought against African Americans; moreover, the CGEE report pointed out the disproportionate, and growing, number of blacks on the welfare rolls—ADC recipients in Baltimore were 77 percent

⁴⁷¹ Donald Bremner, “Thomas J. S. Waxter,” p. 2, in Box 7, Thomas J. S. Waxter Papers, Special Collections, Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

⁴⁷² “Strikers Denied Relief Money,” *Sun*, Feb. 10, 1946; “Striker Aid Sought by CIO,” *Evening Sun*, Feb. 14, 1946

⁴⁷³ “Social Needs Told in Waxter Report—Welfare Director Also Warns Against Racial Tensions,” *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Jan. 3, 1946.

black. Observers argued that prejudice drove the relief investigations, though often in “subtle and unpublicized forms.”⁴⁷⁴

But what made both the New York and Baltimore investigations distinctive were added attacks on the social work personnel who administered the programs. As the CGEE report was prepared in late fall, its investigators initially chose to focus on the perceived mismanagement of the department, particularly the lack of oversight and the latitude granted recipients. In the editorial process, however, the thrust of the report shifted to an outright attack on the social work principles guiding the BDPW’s work. The final report focused on the “unsound psychology” of welfare practice, centering on material drawn from two publications of the Social Security Board’s Bureau of Public Assistance: Charlotte Towle’s *Common Human Needs* and Grace Marcus’s *The Nature of Service in Public Assistance*. Towle’s work was being used by public assistance departments to educate their workers without formal social work training in the basic elements of psychological social casework. Towle, a professor at the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration, argued, “through understanding a person’s feelings we, as representatives of an assistance agency, may through thus sharing his problem afford each individual a relationship which strengthens him.” Neither Towle nor Marcus had

⁴⁷⁴ Lyndon, p. 89, 322; see Walkowitz, p. 188-196, on the role that race played in the New York controversy. On welfare fraud prosecutions in Baltimore, see for example, “4 Admit Welfare Frauds, Given Jail Terms,” *Evening Sun*, June 25, 1947, where two men, one white and one black, and four women, three black and one white, were charged or convicted, a fairly typical pattern from the cases reported in the newspaper that year. CGEE, 17, 21; Welfare exposés became a regular feature of Baltimore papers in the following decade, and by the 1950s, African American welfare recipients, particularly women on AFDC, were explicitly the target of attacks. A series in the Baltimore *American* and *News-Record* in 1959 began with “Welfare Fraud Mere Symptom of Illegitimacy,” (June 21, 1959) and included “Unmoral Code of Slum Guides Unwed Mother,” (June 26, 1959).

been cited in the original draft of the CGEE's report, but the shift in focus to social work practice in the final product gave it a deeper ideological dimension.⁴⁷⁵

The report concluded that the social work conducted in the Department left "little to show in the way of improved community social values," and appeared to "condone and in effect encouraging dependence upon the government, idleness, pauperism, desertion, illegitimacy, dishonesty, and irresponsibility."⁴⁷⁶ In New York City, Robert Lansdale, State Social Welfare Commissioner concluded that such therapeutic approaches had no place in public welfare, ridiculing it as "poor man's psychoanalysis."⁴⁷⁷ Lansdale's comment suggests an emerging distinction between the psychologized problems of the middle class and the pathological problems of the poor, a process Kunzel observes in this period in maternity homes.⁴⁷⁸ The permissiveness, and perhaps the self-indulgence, of emotional counseling seemed a poor match to the potential for fraud and abuse that inhered in the public assistance system. In New York, such sentiments were augmented by direct attacks on the left-leaning social work unions that dominated the public welfare

⁴⁷⁵ In the rough draft of the CGEE report, neither Towle nor Marcus was mentioned. However, in the final version, a section on "Over-All Aspects of the Public Welfare Function" was added that focused on those two authors. CGEE p. 9-13; compare to "Public Welfare in Baltimore," [draft, October 2, 1947], Box 18, Series V, Commission on Government Efficiency and Economy Records, Special Collections, University of Baltimore. Charlotte Towle, *Common Human Needs: An Interpretation for Staff in Public Assistance Agencies* Public Assistance Report No. 8 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1945), p. 9; Grace Marcus, *The Nature of Service in Public Assistance Administration*, Public Assistance Report No. 10 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1946). Frank Kent, "Socialized State Needs Welfare, Agency Says," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, Dec. 27, 1947. National publications picked up on a reference in Towle's work to a "socialized state," setting off a controversy that eventually resulted in the Social Security Administration pulling the publication from use. For this incident, see Wendy B. Posner, "Charlotte Towle: A Biography" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1986), chapter Four. Despite the communist influence inferred from the "socialized state" reference, especially in syndicated coverage of the Baltimore report, the dispute in Baltimore lacked the anti-Communist, anti-union flavor that fed the New York crisis. See Walkowitz, p. 188-196. Coincidentally, Towle and Marcus both had ties to Baltimore: Towle had graduated from Goucher College and had worked briefly for the Red Cross in Baltimore; Marcus—a former caseworker at the private New York CSS—had worked as a district supervisor in the BDPW. "Two Relief Authors Have Background Here," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, Jan. 7, 1948.

⁴⁷⁶ CGEE, p. 80.

⁴⁷⁷ "Lansdale Attacks City Relief System," *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1947, p. 37; Lyndon, p. 174-193.

⁴⁷⁸ Kunzel, p. 144-170.

workforce, and that included demands for better conditions for clients as well as workers in their contract negotiations.⁴⁷⁹

Critics of welfare in both Baltimore and New York did not necessarily dispute the usefulness of social work counseling itself. Lansdale, like the Baltimore report, added, “such procedure in a private casework agency that is offering a clinical casework service may be entirely proper.” Nor was Lansdale an anti-welfare welfare administrator, such as Omaha’s Phil Vogt. Lansdale’s critique reflected the division of labor between public welfare and private family agencies was emblematic of the “New Alignments” Linton Swift had preached in the 1930s. Public welfare’s first task was efficiently tending to the monetary needs of the poor under its charge, while private agencies could nurture the practice of social work counseling as a service separate from welfare. Lansdale was a social worker himself. He had, in fact, been deeply involved in setting up public welfare systems in the 1930s in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. But unlike Josephine Brown, the FERA staffer who was a biting critic of the voluntary sector, Lansdale maintained ties to the private welfare institutions. He was a former faculty member at the New York School of Social Work, which in the 1940s was still under the auspices of the private Community Service Society, and had run the Society’s Institute for Welfare Research.⁴⁸⁰ His emphasis on voluntary institutions reflected the privileged professional status of private agencies. Lansdale argued that public sector social workers were overreaching in their eagerness to deal with emotional problems while neglecting the basic elements of administration that the welfare system demanded. Donald Howard

⁴⁷⁹ Walkowitz, p. 88-192.

⁴⁸⁰ “Robert T. Lansdale,” *Survey Midmonthly* (July 1943): 205. The New York School of Social Work affiliated with Columbia University in 1940, and separated from the CSS in 1950.

of the Russell Sage Foundation, another sympathetic critic of both public welfare and social work counseling, wrote that “Insofar as the difficulty is a preoccupation with ‘casework service’ or ‘therapy’—however valuable these may be in themselves—before legal responsibilities of affirmatively establishing eligibility are firmly met, the social work profession has a problem of its own to meet....”⁴⁸¹

Despite suspicions that there may have been merit in some aspects of the investigation, local and national liberal organizations and social work interest groups vigorously criticized the reports. On the national level, FSAA staff worked with Bureau of Public Assistance officials to mount a rebuttal to the mounting criticism of public welfare administration.⁴⁸² In Baltimore, Waxter had cultivated a “backlog of understanding and good will” for the department’s work by reaching out to organizations likely to support welfare efforts. Groups such as the Progressive Citizens of America were the first to step up to challenge the report, followed by the local American Association of Social Workers chapter. The PCA characterized the report as “a typical condemnation of progressive social philosophy from a reactionary business point of view.” Figures affiliated with voluntary agencies played a variety of roles in the responses to the CGEE report. Sidney Hollander, a liberal Baltimore philanthropist and a board member of several Jewish agencies, and friend of Waxter, used the local chapter of the ADA to coordinate a response to the report with the help of the social work staff of

⁴⁸¹ Donald Howard, “Public Assistance Returns to Page One,” Part II, *Social Work Journal* (July 1948): 117.

⁴⁸² “Editorial Notes: Attacks on Public Assistance Programs,” *JSC* (December 1947): 396; Jane Hoey, “Public Assistance in 1948,” *JSC* (April, 1948): 123-130; Jean Kallenberg to Elizabeth Long, Dec. 16, 1947, Folder 664.411, Box 213; Cora Kasius to Hoey, Dec. 4, 1947, and Hoey to Kasius, Jan. 2, 1948, Folder 064.2, Box 180, all in Correspondence Relating to Public Assistance Plans, 1935-1948, Bureau of Public Assistance Records, RG 47, National Archives, College Park MD.

the private agencies. The state chapter of the League of Women Voters and the local public employees union also protested the report.⁴⁸³ Anna Ward, who had directed Baltimore's Family Welfare Association in the early Depression, spoke in her capacity as Executive Director of the Baltimore Council of Social Agencies to the League of Women Voters, urging higher welfare grants for public relief recipients as a counterpoint to the CGEE criticism of the department.⁴⁸⁴

Private agencies in Baltimore were quiet on the CGEE report. When the Norton articles appeared in the *Sun* in early 1947, the board of the Jewish Family and Children's Bureau offered to write a letter in support of the Department of Welfare, though Waxter asked them to hold off until the story had run its course. But the agency's board recorded no action when the CGEE report was released in December. The Board of Managers of the Family and Children's Service noted the CGEE report and distributed it to each board member, but the minutes recorded no discussion nor did the agency take any public position.⁴⁸⁵ This is somewhat surprising, given that Waxter himself served on the board of the Family and Children's Service, and there were close professional links among the

⁴⁸³ Interview with Howard Beck, Jr., in "History of Baltimore DPW," Box 7, Waxter Papers; "Asks Public to Await Study," *Morning Sun*, Feb. 19, 1947; "Relief Frauds Called Small," *Morning Sun*, March 1, 1947; "P.C.A. Attacks Relief Report as 'Unfair,'" *Morning Sun*, Dec. 13, 1947; "Welfare Criticism Reply Planned," *Evening Sun*, Dec. 19, 1947; "Workers Challenge Welfare 'Experts,'" *Evening Sun*, Dec. 19, 1947; "Larger Relief Grants Urged By Social Agency Executive," *Morning Sun*, Jan. 7, 1948; Sidney Hollander, Speech to Maryland ADA, May 26, 1948, Box 1, Series II, Hollander Papers, Maryland Historical Society. "Women Voters Ask Data on Probe," *Evening Sun*, Dec. 12, 1947; CGEE Board of Trustees Minutes, Jan. 19, 1948, Box 1, Series IIA, CGEE Records. The United Public Workers of America local, which had unionized some of the local social work staff, sent a letter in support of the social workers. "D'Alesandro Will 'Demand' Aid Manager," *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Dec. 23, 1947.

⁴⁸⁴ "Larger Relief Grants Urged by Social Agency Executive," *Baltimore Morning Sun*, Jan. 7, 1948. A *Sun* editorial noted that the CGEE report had pointed out that relief grants were probably lower than the minimum subsistence standards, due to inflation. "On Common Ground," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, Jan. 7, 1948.

⁴⁸⁵ JFCB Board Minutes, Mar. 20, 1947, Box 3, 1995.7; Board of Managers, FCSB, Dec. 18, 1947, Folder 27, Box 5, FCSB.

social work establishment in the state.⁴⁸⁶ It may have been that the agencies feared their own work fell under the shadow of the criticism of social work practice in the report. Johns Hopkins University political scientist V.O. Key, Jr., a member of the board of the CGEE, insisted that the introduction of the report include assurances that it was not applicable to the entire social work profession.⁴⁸⁷

The reticence of the private agencies to speak officially on the report was probably chiefly due to a desire to stay away from a politically contentious issue. And nationally, the FSAA had spoken in support of developing casework service in public agencies.⁴⁸⁸ But it seems plausible that the attack on public welfare counseling might not have entirely displeased some voluntary agencies, for it underscored the division between relief and service that had formed the private agencies' post-New Deal vision of their service. Indeed, one of the sternest critics of welfare abuse in Baltimore was none other than Judge Joseph Sherbow, who at the same time was arguing for voluntary agencies to offer their counseling services to a wider array of clients.⁴⁸⁹ The controversies of 1947, by casting doubt on the propriety of linking counseling to welfare administration, also removed from serious consideration the question of welfare department's extension of those services. Father John O'Grady, head of the National Conference of Catholic

⁴⁸⁶ Baltimore's professional social workers in private agencies shared membership in the Maryland Council of Social Welfare and the Maryland chapter of the American Association of Social Workers with their public agency counterparts. See, for example, "Common Goals of Social Welfare," *The Councilor* (June 1947): 24-29. A sense of shared assault was particularly due to the fact that the report singled out the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Work as the source of much of the problems in the BDPW. Many of Maryland's professional social workers were Penn graduates, since Maryland had no social work school and Penn was the nearest and best school. Penn was the center of the "functional" school of social work, heavily influenced by Otto Rank and with a more client-oriented philosophy than the dominant, Freudian, "diagnostic" school. Ehrenreich, p. 123-138.

⁴⁸⁷ CGEE, p. 3; CGEE Board of Trustees Minutes, Nov. 26, 1947, Box 1, Series IIA, CGEE Records.

⁴⁸⁸ The president of the FSAA's board of directors, as well as its executive director, testified to Congress in support of rehabilitative services in public welfare. *Social Security Act Amendments of 1949*, p. 934.

⁴⁸⁹ "Welfare Fraud Warning Given By Court," *Evening Sun*, Feb. 13, 1947.

Charities, ridiculed the aspirations of public welfare administrators such as Jane Hoey who hoped to service populations outside of the poor—"it would seem more appropriate if the governmental agencies would achieve effective work in the areas in which they are now engaged before entering into new areas."⁴⁹⁰ The invocations by the CGEE report of the skills of the voluntary sector placed them in a favorable light compared to public welfare. State expansion had ground to a halt at a point that seemed natural to voluntary agencies, and the controversy focused the efforts of public officials on defending the basic tenets of the public assistance system, leaving public welfare services to be fought for down the road, and services to the broader population a receding goal.

Defending Welfare

Though the criticism of the social workers who counseled rather than regulated their clients made the controversies of 1947 distinctive, events in Baltimore, New York and elsewhere were not seen as simply a discussion of welfare administration. Both public welfare activists and private agencies saw the CGEE report and the New York controversy as a more fundamental attack on the premises of America's twelve-year-old federal welfare state. Whether this was the motive of individual investigations was an open question. The *Baltimore Sun*, for instance, had not been stridently anti-welfare; in early 1946, it ran articles describing the hardships that insufficient funds would have on the poor, though the articles clearly highlighted the "deserving", i.e., elderly who had worked all their lives, and widows. The paper had, however, shown a penchant for investigating perceived abuses of public resources; Norton himself won a Pulitzer Prize

⁴⁹⁰ *Social Security Act Amendments of 1949*, p. 540.

in 1947 for a 1946 investigation of fraud in unemployment claims.⁴⁹¹ But the interest that the reports generated nationally, and the ripple effect of parallel investigations, indicated that public assistance had not achieved widespread public support. Thus, public welfare proponents staked their defense not on the efficacy of social work but rather tried to restate the basic tenets of public assistance as an element of a broader social security system.⁴⁹²

Despite the silence of Baltimore's private agencies on the criticism of counseling in public welfare, the general instability of public assistance deeply worried them and other private agencies. For agencies in areas where public welfare was limited or non-existent, particularly in the South, it hampered their efforts to establish themselves as therapeutic, rather than relief, agencies. The Meridian, Mississippi Family Service Association gave half of its meager \$11,000 budget for relief; an FSAA field agent reported "it is not quite out of line in a community where public assistance is very low." Similarly, in High Point, North Carolina, the Family Service Bureau reported that a sizeable amount of its budget was spent on relief, "directly related to the need for wider public assistance coverage and more adequate public assistance grants," adding that "the need for such private family casework services had not been fully recognized." In 1947, the board of the Indianapolis family agency complained that, "As long as the amounts of relief given by our two tax-supported relief agencies fall so dangerously short of

⁴⁹¹"Why Welfare Costs so Much," *Evening Sun*, Dec. 19, 1946; "Threat of Welfare Cut Hangs Over Many," *Evening Sun*, Feb. 19, 1946.

⁴⁹² Donald S. Howard, "Public Welfare on Page One," *Survey Midmonthly* (July, 1947): 195-199; John J. Corson, "To Achieve Freedom From Want," *New York Times Magazine*, December 28, 1947; Lucy Freeman, "Politics Assailed in Welfare Field," *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 1948; Bertha C. Reynolds, *Advance or Retreat for Private Family Service?* (New York: United Office and Professional Workers of America, 1948), p. 27.

providing a standard of health and decency, the Agency will be distracted from its main task by a flood of requests for relief.”⁴⁹³

By contrast, private agencies in communities which provided reasonably adequate welfare services found themselves much more stable. The Family Service Society of Pasadena, California, reported that a “well-developed” public welfare department allowed the private agency to focus on “service.” Another California agency reported “exceptional” relationships with their public department, allowing the agency to spend only ten to twenty percent of their resources on financial assistance, much of it for children with special needs.⁴⁹⁴ As studies of private pensions in this era demonstrate, strong private benefits depended on a reasonably strong public base of social provision; for family agencies, strong private service depended on strong public welfare.⁴⁹⁵

Private agencies feared that conservative public officials would use private charity as the fallback for the inadequacies of the public welfare system. In Baltimore, as the welfare shortages became acute in 1946, Waxter had tried to embarrass the Board of Estimates by saying that if the city did not appropriate funds for public assistance, then the private Community Fund would be forced to undertake a special fundraising drive, to which the Board chair replied, “I’m in favor of that.”⁴⁹⁶ The next day, the president of the Community Fund, the president of the Baltimore Family and Children’s Society, and the executive director of the Baltimore Jewish Family and Children’s Bureau arrived to

⁴⁹³ Mary Buckingham, Field Report, Oct. 27, 1947; [Virginia] Amos to Hertel, Dec. 15, 1948, Folder 12, Box 6, FSAA; Hazel Rusterholtz, “A Study of the Relief Practices of the Family Service Association of Indianapolis, January-June, 1949” (MA, Indiana University, 1952), p. 18-19.

⁴⁹⁴ Hertel to Executive Committee, Dec. 6, 1946; Santa Barbara Neighborhood House, May 11, 1949, Folder 12, Box 6, FSAA.

⁴⁹⁵ Klein, p. 7.

⁴⁹⁶ “Welfare Unit Inquiry Plan Meets Rebuff,” *Morning Sun*, March 15, 1946.

inform the Board that the division of responsibility between public and private assumed that public welfare would take care of basic maintenance, that private agencies were focused on more specialized problems, and that they had neither the staff nor the resources to handle shortcomings in public welfare.⁴⁹⁷ Nonetheless, conservative critics of public welfare maintained that the public should shift the responsibility back to charity. A letter from an anonymous, "well-known businessman" to a Baltimore newspaper columnist accused him of being a "sloppy sentimentalist, just like the relief workers ... I am in favor of turning the whole problem back to private charity, like it was until the New Deal came in."⁴⁹⁸

It was manifestly apparent that, in Baltimore and elsewhere, private charity did not relish the prospect of having the "whole problem" turned back to them. The board of the Family and Children's Society of Morris County, New Jersey, had seen its budget drained by supplementing the inadequate grants of one township. In 1947, the board began to lobby the Township Committee to provide more adequate grants to people who were "rightly the responsibility of the township," eventually resulting in higher grants and a relief on the agency's supplementation funds.⁴⁹⁹ Similarly, the Family Society of Wilmington, Delaware repeatedly wrote to Delaware's governor to inform him that their agency would not be able to take up the slack for the shortcomings of basic public assistance during budget shortfalls there.⁵⁰⁰ In Pittsburgh, the Jewish, Catholic, and non-sectarian family agencies organized an Inter-Agency Committee on Public Assistance to

⁴⁹⁷"Board Cites Emergency in Relief Status," *Morning Sun*, March 16, 1946; Board of Managers, FCSB, Mar. 21, 1946, Folder 26, Box 5, FCSB.

⁴⁹⁸ Louis Azreal, "Mail Presents a Debating Society," *Baltimore News-Post*, Dec. 16, 1947.

⁴⁹⁹ Hilda C. Stedman, "A Board's Action on a Relief Issue," *Highlights* (May 1947): 67-68.

⁵⁰⁰ Board of Directors Minutes, Family Society of Wilmington, May 14, 1946; Feb. 18, 1947; Executive Director's Report, FSW, Feb. 17, 1948.

lobby for more adequate public assistance provision. The group met with the governor and testified before the legislature, which eventually appropriated \$25 million more for welfare.⁵⁰¹

In a move designed to forestall backsliding toward private charity, the Bureau of Public Assistance acted to displace private agencies from the field of relief entirely. Even after the passage of the Social Security Act, some voluntary agencies had continued to provide supplemental financial assistance to clients who were eligible for aid from public authorities. This was a particularly common tendency among Jewish family agencies, which had long prided themselves on providing higher levels of financial assistance to needy Jews.⁵⁰² In 1947, the Bureau of Public Assistance (following the example of some local welfare agencies) issued a regulation to states that required administrators of federal welfare funds to deduct money that clients received from private agencies from their public stipend. To Hoey and federal administrators, the policy was intended to firmly establish public institutions as the principal financial safety net and to stimulate recalcitrant states and localities to provide higher relief standards. While private agencies could still supplement with other goods and services, Hoey saw the primary role of private agencies as lobbyists for more adequate public welfare provision.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰¹ Robert E. Comins, "Toward Higher Public Assistance Standards," *Highlights* (December, 1948): 151-153; Thelma K. Flower, "'Social Action on Public Assistance,'" *Highlights* (Oct., 1949): 117. The group made sure to use their board members to testify instead of their professional staff, since the governor and legislators suspected social workers of being "impractical 'do gooders.'"

⁵⁰² Solomon Lowenstein, "Adequacy of Relief," (1904), in Robert Morris and Michael Freund, *Trends and Issues in Jewish Social Welfare in the United States, 1899-1952* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966), p. 61-62.

⁵⁰³ Mildred Kilinski to Jane Hoey, Mar. 12, 1948, Folder Family Service Association, Box 142, Bureau of Public Assistance Correspondence, 1935-1948, RG 47, National Archives, College Park, MD; Kilinski, "Middle Atlantic Executive's Meeting," *Highlights* (May 1948): 73-74; Jane Hoey Oral History, 1966, p. 56-57, Special Collections, Columbia University. BPA State Letter 82 was issued in 1947 and set January 1, 1948 as the enactment date. Some local welfare agencies, such as Detroit, had enacted similar measures

The regulation illustrated the distinct difference between the structure and administration of public assistance versus social insurance in the postwar era. In the late 1930s, members of the Social Security Board realized that it was politically expedient to promote the idea of social insurance as a basic safety net that could be supplemented by aid from employers or by personal insurance. Key business leaders such as Marion Folsom of Kodak, who would serve as Eisenhower's Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the 1950s, and leaders of industrial unions also saw social insurance as a critical foundation from which further benefits in the private sector could be negotiated. The fact that social insurance was not means-tested and was granted as an entitlement meant that the grants were not discretionary; Social Security administrators never proposed that private pensions be deducted from one's social security check—though some employers deducted social security benefits from private pensions. Though ultimately this arrangement may have privileged the private provision of benefits, for decades it helped garner support from vital political constituencies for social insurance plans.⁵⁰⁴

Hoey's Bureau of Public Assistance, and state and local public assistance agencies, lacked the natural, powerful allies with a vested interest in strong public assistance, as evidenced in the widening gap between the social insurance and public assistance tracks of the U.S. welfare state. As other scholars have observed, the structure of public assistance, and its rapid identification with racial minorities, weakened the

in the early 1940s. See Rose Kaplan, "The Cooperative Handling of Family Cases by a Public and Private Agency" (MSW, Wayne State University, 1944), p. 55.

⁵⁰⁴ Klein, ch. 3; Sanford Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 210-220

prospects of robust political support from potential constituencies.⁵⁰⁵ Public assistance could not depend on organized constituencies such as the elderly or unionized workers. But private social agencies, much like employers, had direct institutional interests in building a public base of social provision. In the immediate postwar years, with their organizational interests still clearly linked to welfare, voluntary agencies did attempt to argue for improvements in public assistance. But for a variety of reasons, the public-private safety net that emerged in public assistance was much more frayed than in social insurance.

To some family agencies, the prohibition on supplementation was a relief. The Family and Children's Society of Baltimore thought the ruling underscored the principle that voluntary agencies should not be used to make up for public welfare's inadequacy. The FSAA also supported the move. An FSAA consultant wrote to the Baltimore Jewish agency in 1949 that continuing private support would encourage public agencies to make arbitrary denials of assistance, if they knew the voluntary sector would pick up the slack.⁵⁰⁶

But the prohibition brought howls of protest from voluntary institutions such as the Baltimore Jewish Family and Children's Bureau. Jerome Sampson, the agency's executive, told his annual meeting in 1948 that "the tradition of financial assistance seems to be too deeply rooted in the convictions of this Jewish community to make the

⁵⁰⁵ The literature on the travails of public assistance is voluminous, and arguments about the source of the programs' weaknesses contentious. These include Bell, ch. 4; Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), ch. 5; Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty*, p. 85-91; Edward Berkowitz, *America's Welfare State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), ch. 5; Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 293-306; Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line*, ch. 4; Mittelstadt.

⁵⁰⁶ Board of Managers, FCSB, June 24, 1948, Folder 29, Box 5, FCSB; Cecile Whalen to Fannye Cohen, May 3, 1949, Folder "Baltimore JFCB, 1948-49," Box 54, FSAA.

discarding or sharp diminution of relief giving either possible or desirable.” But Sampson’s position, shared by many members of the agency’s board of directors, was out of line with the evolution of family service in general, and in any case could not be maintained in light of the new regulations. After protesting to the State Department of Welfare, the agency reluctantly began to withdraw support from 43 cases, while negotiating the admission of another 17 cases to the Jewish old age home in Baltimore and worrying about “community acceptance of a change in agency policy.” Some within the agency—including board member Sidney Hollander—noted that ruling made way for a “clearing of the air” about the relative responsibilities of the private agency and the Department of Welfare, and the annual report for 1948 concluded that the regulation was “salutary.”⁵⁰⁷

The regulations were clearly more salutary for agencies than for the needy. The Baltimore *Evening Sun* announced in January 1949 the case of the “Vet Facing Rainy-Day Eviction; None Can Help.” The vet was an unemployed white truck driver with a family of five. “None” included the Department of Public Welfare, who would not help the man because he was “employable,” and Family and Children’s Service and the Red Cross, who considered the case to be a public responsibility. The Legal Aid Bureau, who had been helping the family search for aid, approached Family and Children’s Service again after two days of publicity in the *Sun* and asked again for help. Clark Mock, the executive director of FCS, said they could give the back rent if the man had a job in sight, or if the DPW would agree to take on the case. Neither was possible, retorted the Legal

⁵⁰⁷ Jerome Sampson, “Remarks for Annual Meeting,” Feb. 2, 1948, Box 3; Board of Directors, JCFB, Mar. 24, 1948; Apr. 22, 1948; May 27, 1948; JCFB Baltimore, *Annual Report, 1948*, all Box 3, 1995.7, JMM; “Report of FSAA Contact—Baltimore,” Mar. 23, 1948; Sampson to Cecile Whalen, Mar. 20, 1948, both in “Baltimore JCFB, 1948-49,” Box 54, FSAA.

Aid lawyer, and the private agency would either have to help or face more negative publicity. Facing that choice, the agency approved aid after official word that the DPW had rejected the family—though in the end, the newspaper publicity generated enough donations to tide the family over, and the Family and Children’s Service was able to help the man find a job through the Trucker’s Union. It was not an unusual case; FCS had been forced to grant aid to a similar family a year before, under pressure from the police department who had housed the family overnight after they were evicted. Ironically, the father had been given a medical discharge due to “combat fatigue” after fighting in the Pacific, and seemed overwhelmed by the crisis facing his family—a perfect case, it would have seemed, for counseling at the FCS, had public aid have been available to take care of the family’s financial needs.⁵⁰⁸

While the prohibitions on cash supplementation flowed out of the aspirations of liberal welfare administrators for a more systematic and comprehensive public assistance system, the “new alignments” foundered on the reality of circumscribed eligibility and the persistent underfunding of public assistance. These problems pervaded the relationship between the voluntary sector and public welfare throughout the late 1940s. Maryland’s state legislature had shown little inclination to increase the state’s portion of the welfare budget, and the investigations of the Baltimore Department further soured legislators. In 1947, amidst budget increases for every other state department, the State Welfare Department was the only one to suffer cuts. This was a function not only of bad publicity, but the antipathy of rural legislators for increased welfare expenditures for

⁵⁰⁸ Case Committee Minutes, Mar. 4, 1948, Folder 1, Box 7, FCSB ; “Vet Facing Rainy-Day Eviction—None Can Help,” *Evening Sun*, Jan. 5, 1949; “Evicted Desells Move with Future Uncertain,” *Evening Sun*, Jan. 6, 1949; Case Committee, FCSB, Jan. 6, 1949; Jan. 20, 1949, Folder 1, Box , FCSB.

urban recipients, influenced by “statewide attitudes toward the negro.”⁵⁰⁹ Both clients and Baltimore’s Department of Public Welfare routinely turned to voluntary agencies to help compensate for the limitations in eligibility or funding in the public program. The Department began enforcing the prohibition on assistance to families with an employable member in February 1946, and in addition placed ceilings on grants to eligible families. These decisions, in addition to residence requirements of up to several years for public assistance, excluded Baltimore’s recent migrants, families with employable workers who had exhausted or were ineligible for unemployment insurance, or large families whose needs were beyond DPW budgets. Such people immediately sought out the voluntary agencies, sometimes encouraged by the staff of the DPW. Family and Children’s Service wrote to Waxter in 1946 to protest the referrals and remind him that financial assistance was supposed to be a public responsibility. But Waxter, fighting for appropriations for the categories they still accepted, did not change the policy, even after repeated meetings and entreaties from the private agencies, who then moved to try to lobby state officials. Writing to J. Milton Patterson, the director of the Maryland Department of Public Welfare, Family and Children’s Service profiled one case, the “S” family of nine. He had a job at Baltimore Gas and Electric but his salary was too low to support his family, and “because of this man’s limitations it is not likely that he will ever be able to earn much more than his present salary.” Prior to February, the DPW had supplemented his earnings, but the end of aid to employables cut off the Department’s help to the family.

⁵⁰⁹ Gerald Monsman, “Comments on Legislation,” *The Councilor* (Dec. 1947): 45; Board of Directors, JFCB, Oct. 26, 1948, Box 3, 1995.7, JMM.

As a result, his wife had been begging on the street in order to make extra money.⁵¹⁰

In another case in 1946, Family and Children's Service balked at the proposal to give financial assistance to the "L" family of seven, several of whom suffered from tuberculosis, whose DPW allowance had been cut from \$185 per month to \$120. Since it was an active DPW case, the private agency's workers reported to the Board, they felt that they should not take it on. Apparently hoping that turning the "L" family away would help convince the DPW of the error of its ways, the Board decided not to help the family but told the caseworker to monitor the situation carefully and to notify them if the family fell into dire straits.⁵¹¹

The disposition of the "L" family was not typical of the "problem" cases that filtered up to the FCSB board, which found ways to help a number of families either excluded or underserved by the Department of Public Welfare in the late 1940s. But they clearly wished that the public agencies would embrace more fully the responsibilities they had acquired in the 1930s, and it drove them, reluctantly, to take more public stands in support of adequate welfare. In 1949, cases such as the evicted veteran were mounting in Maryland. All of the private agencies found themselves having to routinely grant money to families of unemployed workers who could not get help from the public agency, which itself had cut off aid to patently eligible clients due to funding shortages. The Community Chest flatly refused to grant any more money for relief expenditures to its member agencies, and the Council of Social Agencies, after "a series of stormy and difficult meetings," decided that political activity such as lobbying for increased welfare

⁵¹⁰ Board of Managers, FCSB, Feb. 25, 1946; June 20, 1946. On the "S" family, see Board of Managers, FCSB, Oct. 17, 1946, and FCSB to J. Milton Patterson [Nov. 1946], all in Folder 26, Box 5, FCSB.

⁵¹¹ Case Committee, FCSB, Nov. 11, 1946, Folder 1, Box 7; Board of Managers, FCSB, Dec. 19, 1946, Folder 26, Box 5.

funding from the state, had to be within its purview. The FCSB, having lost its Community Chest support for financial relief, made a public announcement of discontinuing its meager \$250 per month budget for financial assistance. "Little Aid from Private Charity is Expected," reported the *Sun*, quoting Clark Mock that "The Welfare Department assumed this responsibility in the Depression."⁵¹² The Council of Social Agencies, with the support of the Community Chest, produced a study that argued for increased aid to the unemployed, and, under mounting political pressure, Governor William Lane gave the Welfare Department permission to overspend its appropriation in order to supply emergency unemployment relief. Board members and executives of Baltimore's major private agencies were in Annapolis the day the Legislature passed the bill covering the deficit, ready to lobby if need be.⁵¹³

Family Service and the Welfare State

Such efforts on behalf of public welfare embodied the hopes not only of public welfare administrators such as Jane Hoey, but also of progressives within the family service movement. The work of sympathetic private sector workers and liberal board members such as Sidney Hollander defined the progressive, public policy oriented wing of the voluntary sector. Hollander was from a comfortable, liberal Baltimore German Jewish household. As the president of a small but successful pharmaceutical company, he acquired the economic status and stature to give him the time and the prominence to

⁵¹² Board of Managers, FCSB, Mar. 24, 1949; Oct. 21, 1949, Folder 29, Box 5. "Welfare Warning," *Evening Sun*, May 4, 1949; "Little Aid From Private Charity is Expected," *Evening Sun*, May 18, 1949.

⁵¹³ Board of Managers, FCSB, May 24, 1949; Oct. 21, 1949; Dec. 22, 1949, Folder 29, Box 5; Clark Mock to E. S. Williams, Dec. 20, 1949, Folder 43, Box 10, FCSB; "Charity Groups Endorse Lane Relief Plan," *Evening Sun*, Dec. 15, 1949.

participate in secular Jewish philanthropy, first in Baltimore and increasingly at the national level. He had also served since 1920 as a board member of the Maryland Board of State Aid and Charities (later the State Department of Public Welfare).⁵¹⁴

Through his involvement with Baltimore's Jewish Family and Children's Service, an FSAA member agency, Hollander had been nominated to the FSAA's national board in the 1940s. From that position, he was the most vigorous supporter of what Malcolm Nichols, the executive director of the Boston Family Society, called "That 'Second Major Function'"—social action by voluntary agencies.⁵¹⁵ During the early 1930s, in the throes of the Depression, Linton Swift, the executive director of the FWAA, had been a prominent spokesman for the voluntary sector in favor of public intervention to relieve the unemployment crisis. As the welfare state began to expand, and private agencies began to look inward toward repositioning themselves, critics assailed social workers for abandoning the dirty world of politics. Murray Hearn, a New York School of Social Work graduate who had moved on to become a justice in the New York court system, argued that private agencies had the potential to effect political change, and pointed to the activity of the Muskegon (Michigan) Family Service Bureau which had helped lobby successfully for a child guidance center. But at the national level, Hearn argued that social workers had lost their taste for supporting welfare state legislation.⁵¹⁶

Hollander and others pressed for the FSAA to assert itself as an advocate for an expanded welfare state, particularly during the flurry of legislative initiatives aimed at the postwar period. He and others hoped to use the national prestige of the FSAA to weigh in

⁵¹⁴ Sidney Hollander Jr., "Sidney Hollander: A Biographical Sketch December 29, 1881 - February 23, 1972," Hollander Papers.

⁵¹⁵ Malcolm S. Nichols, "That Second 'Major Function,'" *Highlights* (Feb. 1947): 17.

⁵¹⁶ Murray Hearn, "Social Workers and Politicians," *Survey Midmonthly* (Oct. 1944): 276.

on pending legislation, but also to help prod local agencies into exerting pressure on their Congressional delegations. Ralph Uihlein, the liberal president of the Milwaukee Family Welfare Association and a national officer of the FSAA, wrote to Swift, "I have come to the conclusion that many of our agencies are in a fog as to what their responsibility for social action is and how they can be useful on such matters."⁵¹⁷

Hollander hoped to change that. As chair of the FSAA's Committee on Social Legislation in 1945, Hollander forwarded the analysis of federal social welfare legislation done by FSAA staffers and recommended that the FSAA come out in support of the Hospital Construction Act, the establishment of a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission, and most importantly, the Full Employment Act of 1945, all elements of the liberal vision of the postwar welfare state.⁵¹⁸ In arguing for the last bill, the Committee called up the specter of the "family erosion" due to unemployment during the Depression. But to make the point more directly to the Board, the Committee invoked the self-interest of private family agencies in a floor under employment:

... It would be a distinct step backwards if family agencies were compelled to return to a major preoccupation with employment problems. The establishment of any successful program in the United States would help eliminate this direct threat to the continued progress of family agencies toward the provision of the best skilled service in personal adjustment for problems over and beyond those related to family finances.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁷ Ralph Uihlein to Swift, May 31, 1945, Folder 14, Box 14, FSAA.

⁵¹⁸ Nelson Lichtenstein, "From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era," in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989): 122-152.

⁵¹⁹ Morris Zelditch, the FSAA's Social Legislation staffer, had headed the FWAA's War Service program and was well-versed in wartime federal public services. As war-associated funding dried up, he was told to look elsewhere for employment. He left the FSAA to join the Council of Jewish Federations in late 1945. FSAA Executive Committee Minutes, April 13, 1945, Folder 12, Box 6, FSAA; "Comments on Full

Similarly, FSAA director Linton Swift won the support of the Board to write to President Truman in favor of extending wartime public funding for daycare centers. In his letter, Swift noted that FSAA agencies had been participating in about 100 daycare projects, and the threat of withdrawing public funds had resulted in requests for local family agencies to fund the centers, "a responsibility which few are in a position to undertake."⁵²⁰

Despite the appeals for support based on both social conscience and organizational self-interest, this spate of post-war FSAA activism (which included statements of support for the above-mentioned legislation, as well as for public housing and the extension of wartime "social protection" services) fizzled by the end of 1945. The sluggish pace of approval of FSAA resolutions called into question the effectiveness of the group as an advocacy organization. Most importantly, the quest for consensus in a membership organization, both among board members and its constituent agencies, made the FSAA national staff reluctant to take bold stances. The Executive Committee had bounced resolutions on hospital construction and the FEPC back to the Social Legislation committee for further review, and wondered if they had the right to act in the name of the full membership without a vote. It was a process that infuriated Hollander. Writing to Swift, he conceded that a national agency such as the FSAA had to be "deliberate and slow-moving," but by the time they were ready to act, the bills would either have been passed or killed, leaving FSAA resolutions "meaningless gestures."⁵²¹ Swift, who had been an outspoken supporter of federal public relief in the 1930s, admitted to Hollander

Employment Bill of 1945," June 22, 1945, "Comments on Full Employment Bill of 1945," Sept. 10, 1945; Folder 12, Box 14, FSAA.

⁵²⁰ Swift to Harry Truman, September 26, 1946, Folder 14, Box 14, FSAA.

⁵²¹ FSAA Executive Committee Minutes, April 13, 1945; Hollander to Swift, Sept. 7, 1945, Folder 12, Box 6, FSAA.

that he held few hopes for the FSAA to act as an effective advocate. Since the FSAA was a “functional” organization that was created to serve the organizational interests of its members, Swift argued it was not set up to do direct lobbying, and indeed, risked running afoul of IRS restrictions on non-profits and political action. Moreover, pressure from the national organization on local agencies would probably go nowhere—“local agencies do resent pressure from national sources.” Following an FSAA staff cutback in October, the activities of the Social Legislation Committee were suspended.⁵²²

Community Service Society and New York’s Welfare Cuts

Events on the local level also illustrated why private agencies served, at best, as reluctant advocates for an expanded welfare state. Private family agencies found themselves more comfortable with “education” of the public as to social needs than with direct political engagement. The FSAA’s primary public response to the 1947 controversies was to collate data on the increased cost of living and the need for higher welfare budgets, and send it out to local agencies to publicize in their hometown papers. Angela Cox, executive director of the Family Service Society of Fulton and DeKalb Counties, Georgia, got the *Atlanta Constitution* to write up a story on how “families in the Atlanta area face an increasing threat to family stability caused by rising living costs,” and identified her agency as a resource for information on public assistance, budgeting, job searches, and money for acute medical needs. The Baltimore Family and Children’s

⁵²² Swift to Hollander, October 9, 1945; Executive Committee Minutes, [Oct 11, 1945], Folder 12, Box 6, FSAA.

Service promulgated similar stories.⁵²³

In New York City, where welfare issues remained intensely politicized, private agencies found it hard to avoid engaging in politics. Raymond Hilliard, the former head of the Illinois Public Aid Commission who had a track record of actively prosecuting welfare fraud cases and supporting stringent reviews of welfare applications, was brought in by Mayor William O'Dwyer in early 1948, in the wake of the 1947 controversies, to root out fraud from the welfare rolls and Communists from the welfare workers.⁵²⁴ Despite Hilliard's hiring, welfare remained a front-page issue in New York. As the cost of living continued to increase during 1948, pressure from public workers' unions and eventually, the *New York Times* produced a 25 percent increase in food budgets for welfare recipients.⁵²⁵ The number of people on public assistance had also grown, roughly doubling since the end of the war, though still half of the number of that at the beginning of the war. As inflation eased in 1949 and food prices began to drop, Hilliard (under pressure from the State Department of Social Welfare, which contributed the majority of the city's Home Relief and ADC money) seized the opportunity to propose adjusting welfare allowances downward by six percent in an effort to contain the city's costs.⁵²⁶

⁵²³ "Inflation Seen As Threat to Family Life," *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 31, 1947; "Wrecked by High Prices," *Sun*, Jan. 11, 1948; "Maximum Food Allowances Held Inadequate," *Morning Sun*, Jan. 24, 1948; "Current and Future Directions in Family Service Program," *Highlights* (February 1949): 23-24.

⁵²⁴ Jerome Beatty, "The Most Hated Man In Town," *The American Magazine* (Sept. 1950): 24-25, 116-120. See Walkowitz generally on Hilliard and social worker activism, p. 192-199. Despite his reputation in New York, when Hilliard moved back to Chicago to take a job as director of the Cook County Department of Public Aid, he earned praise from the Chicago Urban League as a civil rights supporter and advocate for the poor. Dennis C. Dickerson, *Militant Mediator: Whitney M. Young Jr.* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998). p. 256

⁵²⁵ Doris Greenberg, "City to Increase Food Grants 25%," *New York Times*, Sept. 1, 1948; Walkowitz, p. 192.

⁵²⁶ City of New York, Department of Welfare, "Trends in Public Assistance Caseload," Dec. 9, 1949. This document alluded to migration from Puerto Rico and "the South" (presumably mostly African American) as one of the reasons for increases in the welfare rolls. "These latest arrivals," said the anonymous author, "while they add many competent people to the labor force, also bring a group with a higher public

An actual cutback in welfare, even for those clearly eligible, sent shock waves through the private family agencies. Anna Kempshall, the head of the Community Service Society's Family Service division, wrote to general director Stanley Davies to urge that the CSS take a public position on the matter. Since the DPW budgets were too low, in the eyes of the CSS and most other agencies—the DPW grants rarely met the levels set by the Budget Standards Service, an organization that set relief standards for private agencies—cutbacks could not be justified even with falling prices. Instead, they urged, the DPW needed to shift a number of items, including first aid supplies, carfare, postage, and telephone use from the “permissive” (after review by the department) to the standard budgets. From the standpoint of the CSS, a reasonable budget on public assistance was critical in maintaining a “normal and satisfactory family life.”⁵²⁷

Caution marked every turn of the CSS's concern, though. Davies allowed Kempshall to circulate the statement only among the district office staffs. He also sent a copy for comment to Bayard Pope, a board member of the CSS. While the New York boards of the AFL and the CIO, the City Council and other groups protested publicly, Davies first wrote a private letter to Hilliard expressing the agency's concern, based on “our close working relationship with families in need.”⁵²⁸ Such circumspection did not sit

dependency rate because of the lack of family resources in the community.” See Peter Kasius to Raymond Hilliard, Dec. 19, 1949, on state versus city responsibility for adjusting welfare budgets. [City of New York, Department of Welfare, “Revised Public Assistance Allowances,” Informational No. 49-101, Dec. 20, 1949.] All in Folder “New York City Welfare Department,” Box 370, Community Service Society of New York Records, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁵²⁷ Kempshall to Davies, [December, 1949]; CSS Family Service, “Statement on Department of Welfare Services,” Dec. 19, 1949; CSS Family Service, “Statement on Department of Welfare Budgets for Public Relief Recipients, Dec. 23, 1949; Lillian Anderson to Davies, Dec. 28, 1949. Folder “New York City Welfare Department,” Box 370, CSS.

⁵²⁸ Davies to Bayard Pope, Dec. 23, 1949; Davies to Kempshall, Dec. 30, 1949; Davies to Hilliard, Jan. 3, 1950, Folder “New York City Welfare Department,” Box 370, CSS; “Union Groups Join to Bar Relief Cut,” *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 1950, p. 3.

well with the staff of the CSS. The Yorkville District office caseworkers wrote a letter to Davies complementing him on the memo and the letter to Hilliard, but expressing also their disappointment that the CSS was not taking a public stand. Not only were thousands of families going to suffer as a result, they noted, but also “in addition, our own services to clients will be seriously interfered with as their every-day problems of survival are increased beyond endurance.”⁵²⁹

It was the staff that felt most keenly the need for welfare: in their eyes, it was first and foremost a humanitarian program, and one that increasingly provided the base on which their own services rested. In a meeting with public welfare supervisors in December 1949, voluntary sector workers were furious, complaining that the public workers were pushing cases back to the voluntary sector, so cowed by the scandals that they were being overly restrictive. Ruth Mann of the Jewish Social Service Bureau despaired that “DPW workers are coming to us for the humanity that should be in their program.”⁵³⁰ Even in New York City, which granted relatively generous public assistance, welfare clients still claimed the attention of private agencies. Twenty-one percent of CSS Family Service clients received assistance from the Department of Welfare, but this was only a fraction of a percent of the total welfare caseload. CSS clients benefited from the advocacy of the CSS caseworkers familiar with DW procedures, but most welfare clients did not, and had trouble in particular negotiating for items on the “permissible” list. Such advocacy cost the CSS as well, they noted—one worker estimated that helping one family secure clothing they needed from the

⁵²⁹ Yorkville District CSS to Davies, Jan. 5, 1950, Folder “NYC Welfare Department,” Box 370, CSS.

⁵³⁰ “Meeting of Representatives of Various Voluntary Groups and Dept. of Welfare,” Dec. 15, 1949, “NYC Welfare Dept, Allowance 1949-1950,” Box 370, CSS Records.

Department cost the CSS \$40 of her time. The Yorkville report concluded, “the penalties are severe for those who are not aggressive and persistent in making known their need.”⁵³¹

To support their case, the Yorkville case workers produced a clear example of the “deserving” poor: the “A” family, a young mother who had health problems, with three children, separated from her “seriously disturbed” husband, who failed to contribute his weekly child support of \$10 about every other week. The mother has excellent household management and nutritional skills, reported a CSS worker, but the family’s clothing allowance was so seriously depleted that the children could not go to school on cold days. The father’s failure to pay reduced the income of the family \$20 per month—an amount equal to the allowance for clothing and for small items—but the DW would not cover the father’s failure to pay. Moreover, even though the DW had agreed it was in the interests of the mother and the younger child’s “emotional health” for the child to be in a nursery, the Department would not approve the weekly \$1.50 nursery fee, nor would it meet carfare for clinic visits for the mother, even though it was a permissible item. CSS workers reported that the mother was unable to stop worrying, and said, “I can cry and moan, as do so many others like me, but what can I do — is there anything else?” The *New York Times* cited two similar examples of deprivation inflicted by reduced budgets and stringent application of budget rules: a widowed mother of three (one with a rheumatic heart), as well as a 78-year-old woman and her 69-year-old brother.⁵³²

The Jefferson District staff argued that cases like Family “A” represented most of

⁵³¹ “Memorandum from Yorkville District Staff,” Feb. 10, 1950, Folder “New York City Welfare Department,” Box 370, CSS.

⁵³² “Memorandum From Yorkville District Staff;” “The Welfare Findings,” *New York Times*, Jan. 20, 1950; Lucy Freeman, “Relief Cuts Leave a Wake of Misery,” *New York Times*, Jan. 20, 1950, p. 31.

the CSS's direct engagement with welfare—"numerous costly hours working out a small misunderstanding or technical difficulty for his client." But little was gained on the larger scale that could prevent such cases, or help those who were not CSS clients. Engagement on the "Board and Administrative level" was necessary to try to address the systemic problems in public assistance "that are so costly but unsolvable on the individual staff member level."⁵³³ CSS staff members pushed for active political engagement on the welfare budget issue. The Jefferson District staff said pointedly that the CSS's history of speaking out on welfare issues had "dulled" as the agency focused less on financial assistance and when welfare cuts did not directly translate into money out of the CSS coffers.⁵³⁴ After the prodding by the Yorkville staff, Davies released his letter to Hilliard to the press. Davies's role earned him a berth on a mayoral commission on the welfare cuts later that year, which successfully pushed for increases allowances in certain categories, but it also earned him a chiding from the staff union that the agency could have played a more aggressive role in pushing for higher allowances.⁵³⁵

But Davies was under pressure not only from liberal staff members, but also from conservative members of the Board of Directors. A series of correspondence at the CSS during the 1950 welfare controversy illustrates this dilemma. Board member Walter H. Page of J.P. Morgan, wrote to Percy Chubb, another CSS board member. Page reported conversations with several current and former contributors to the CSS in which he found

⁵³³ Jefferson District staff to Davies, March 27, 1950; Folder "New York City Welfare Department," Box 370, CSS.

⁵³⁴ Kempshall to Davies, Feb. 1, 1950; Yorkville staff to Davies, Feb. 9, 1950; Jefferson District staff to Davies, March 27, 1950, Folder "New York City Welfare Department," Box 370, CSS.

⁵³⁵ Davies to Hilliard, Jan. 10, 1950; Jean Robinson to Stanley Davies, Feb. 27, 1950; Hilliard to Davies, Aug. 17, 1950; Folder "NYC Welfare Department," Box 370, CSS. "City Relief Cuts Opposed," *New York Times*, Jan. 10, 1950; "O'D Asks State, U.S. to Confer on Relief," *The Daily Compass*, Jan. 11, 1950, p. 7.

that “they all have in the back of their minds the huge state, city and federal welfare expenditures in the City of New York and wonder what function the C.S.S. has to do which is not taken care of through those channels.” Page thought the agency should stress how “the Community Service Society is working to get people off the welfare roles [sic] and to keep them from going on them.” Chubb wrote back agreeing that the “work CSS does along preventative lines” should be emphasized. He also expressed hope that the CSS would join several other private agencies that took a “constructive affirmative” position on Hilliard’s efforts to reform the Department of Welfare—hardly the stance the staff was arguing for.⁵³⁶

The CSS fell back on the “new alignments” argument to placate its board members, but added the twist that its efforts might have some bearing on public welfare caseloads. Leonard Harrison, director of the CSS’s public affairs bureau wrote to Chubb that the agency “ministers to these families who, if not given timely help to make adjustments, are likely to deteriorate under the weight of their difficulties and gravitate to the public assistance rolls.” While the preventative efforts of the CSS may be hard to quantify, continued Harrison, “common sense tells us that our successes are cumulative in their rehabilitative effects” and that the CSS helps prevent further breakdown that would ultimately cost the public “in a tax payment sense.”⁵³⁷

Harrison had none other than Hilliard to support his case. He pointed to Hilliard’s praise for the agency’s work with families who ““without the services you make available, might well be forced on to public assistance.” “We, in public welfare,” Hilliard

⁵³⁶ Walter H. Page to Percy Chubb II, March 24, 1950; Chubb to Page, March 28, 1950, Folder “New York City Welfare Department,” Box 370, CSS.

⁵³⁷ Leonard V. Harrison to Chubb, April 7, 1950, Folder “New York City Welfare Department,” Box 370, CSS.

said, "cannot help at all if the basis is not money need. You are doing real preventative work...." To the *New York Times*, Hilliard had argued that the public agency did not have the resources to rehabilitate clients and that his agency needed help from the private agencies. Lower level department employees tacitly agreed with Hilliard. Though protesting to their private agency counterparts that they were still endeavoring to provide service as well as money to their clients, they admitted that the attacks on the department made close examination of eligibility their first priority.⁵³⁸

The limitations and politicization of welfare in public agencies, contrasted with the increasingly therapeutic orientation of private agencies, encouraged a migration of social workers from public to private institutions. One prominent example was Bernice Quimby, a Pennsylvania School of Social Work graduate who took charge of Delaware's Mothers' Pension Commission in the 1930s (later the Commission for Aid to Dependent Children, which then merged with the State Board of Welfare). She resigned from her post in 1947 following the refusal of the State Legislature to appropriate funds adequate to meet "barest needs" for relief families. After a send-off dinner attended by the state's leading social workers (with Ethelda Mullen of the Family Society serving as toastmistress), Quimby moved to New York to a position as director of the Children's Division of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.⁵³⁹

Thus, the welfare controversies of the late 1940s were a double-edged sword for family agencies. On the one hand, they indicated a significant undercurrent of

⁵³⁸ Harrison to Chubb; "Hilliard Outlines Plans on Welfare," *NYT* May 14, 1948, p. 24; "Meeting of Representatives...."

⁵³⁹ "Welfare Head Quits; Fund Cuts Blamed," *Journal Every Evening* (Wilmington, Del.), Apr. 16, 1947; "Social Workers Pay Tribute to Miss A. Bernice Quimby," *Journal Every Evening*, May 28, 1947; "Miss Quimby Gets N.Y. Post," *Journal Every Evening*, July 15, 1948.

dissatisfaction with public assistance, on which they had built their assumptions about the future of voluntary family agencies. On the other hand, stressing the service aspects of voluntary agencies was a meaningful way to distinguish them from welfare without attacking welfare. Such prominence was not without its pitfalls, though. Donald Howard of the Russell Sage Foundation issued a prescient warning in 1948: "Still another professional responsibility would appear to be the danger of overselling the possibilities of rehabilitation. Especially voluntary agencies, under necessity of raising their budgets through public solicitation, need to guard against leading the public to believe that casework can work miracles which it really cannot perform."⁵⁴⁰

Howard's warning would go largely unheeded by private and public agencies in the 1950s. Indeed, caseworkers on both sides of the institutional divide moved to assiduously promote the capacity of their professional talents to solve an expanding number of social problems. Public institutions set aside their hopes of servicing clients outside the welfare population but moved to slowly build the case for social services that seemed to have been rejected for the time being in Baltimore and New York. Even in Baltimore, despite the attacks on social work counseling, the Department of Public Welfare continued to experiment with a project of assigning several trained caseworkers a greatly reduced caseload of ADC families, in the hope that their casework skills might help move the family off of welfare. The CGEE report itself pointed to a more tough-minded approach to service as a possibility, if "Baltimore wishes to get some return in increased social value through the rehabilitation and regained independence of those

⁵⁴⁰ Donald Howard, "Public Assistance Returns to Page One, Part II," *Social Work Journal* (July 1948): 115-116.

receiving public assistance....”⁵⁴¹

Private agencies realized that public welfare would not poach their efforts to build their clientele among the middle class. But the division of responsibility between public and private, welfare and service, often seemed like an abdication of responsibility in the immediate postwar era, as public agencies desperately tried to contain costs and caseloads, and private agencies attempted to force public institutions to meet their obligations. Administrative agreements between agencies crumbled under the reality of unmet needs. This continuing connection to welfare institutions made the social responsibility of voluntary agencies much less clear-cut than they would have preferred. The next two chapters will focus on two episodes in the 1950s that exemplified the possible accommodations voluntary agencies made with the wider welfare system: in a strong welfare system, as exemplars of high-quality casework and promoters of its use with the most troubled and impoverished, or surviving in a weak welfare system by eschewing responsibility for servicing the poor.

⁵⁴¹ CGEE, p. 47, 83.

CHAPTER FIVE: HOPE FOR HOPELESS FAMILIES?

Introduction

“Is there hope for ‘hopeless’ families?” asked Carl Rowan in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1958. The blurb for his story continued, “Tired of pouring money down the relief rathole, St. Paul Minnesota is trying a new approach to a seemingly insoluble problem. Can they really do something about the 6 percent of families who use more than half the welfare dollars while breeding criminals?” The social workers on the Family Centered Project in St. Paul, which was the basis for the story, were disappointed when they read a preview of the Rowan piece. “Our families do not ‘breed criminals’, we are not ‘pouring assistance down the rathole,’” they complained to project leaders.⁵⁴² However, their own descriptions of their work, while less lurid, struck similar themes; the hard core of “multi-problem” families they dealt with suffered from “chain reactions” of poverty, illness, and anti-social behavior that would be repeated by their children; “where life runs thin — social maladjustment is passed on as if it were a precious heirloom.”⁵⁴³

Much like the “underclass” in the late twentieth century, the idea of the “multi-problem family” gained popularity among a broad swath of observers of American social problems at mid-century. It identified a hard-core group of the poor heretofore immune to societal intervention that transmitted dependence and criminality to further generations.

Identifying a small group of families that cost society so much created the opportunity for

⁵⁴²Carl T. Rowan, “Is There Hope for ‘Hopeless’ Families?” *Saturday Evening Post*, July 8, 1958, p. 11; Minutes, June 26, 1958, Family Centered Committee, Folder 2, Box 1, St. Paul Family Centered Project Records (FCP), Social Welfare History Archives (SWHA), University of Minnesota. Rowan, the first African American to write for the Minneapolis *Tribune*, was already building a national reputation and had published in the *Post* extensively. Rowan subsequently told the Project workers that the editors at the *Post* had written the blurb. See Parents’ Advisory Group Meeting, Jan. 26, 1959, Folder 163, Box 17, FCP.

⁵⁴³Charles Birt, “A Community Plan for an Attack on Economic and Social Dependency in Families,” speech to the Tennessee Conference of Social Work, Mar. 19, 1954; Folder 284, Box 28, FCP.

people to try to cure these families. An application of focused scientific expertise seemed to promise massive social savings.

By the early 1960s, the term “multi-problem family” had become ubiquitous within the social work profession and allied organizations, such as local community chests that provided funds for voluntary social welfare agencies. One study identified 143 projects in communities in the U.S. and Canada that were being planned, conducted, or concluded, that aimed at reducing the problems of the multi-problem family.⁵⁴⁴ Such studies lay the empirical groundwork for the passage of the 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act that provided incentives for states to provide social services to welfare recipients to help promote financial independence and “strengthen” the family lives of welfare recipients. Within the social work profession, the term provided a popular, unifying concept that was often interchangeable with similar terminology, such as the “hard-core poor,” “hard-to-reach families,” “difficult cases,” and so-on.⁵⁴⁵ It captured the experiences of social workers in voluntary and public welfare agencies with a certain segment of their clientele with whom they had struggled over the years. For social workers and social planners in the 1950s, the idea of the multi-problem family served two important purposes: it identified a group of persistent problem families that

⁵⁴⁴ Research Department, Community Chests and Councils of the Greater Vancouver Area. *Community Treatment Programs for Multi-Problem Families: A Survey of 260 North American Communities* (Vancouver: Community Chests and Councils of the Greater Vancouver Area, 1962).

⁵⁴⁵ See, for example, its use in theses by social work students in the 1960s: Eleanor Austin, “The Problems of the Multi-Problem Family,” (MSW, Wayne State University, 1962); Edith Back, “Public Welfare and the War on Poverty: An Experimental Project With Multi-Problem Families,” (MSW, Richmond Professional Institute, 1965); Harriette Farr, “A Study of Agency Contacts of Ten Multi-Problem Families,” (MSW, Florida State University, 1968).

seemed distinct from the general population, and it suggested a particular range of policy responses in dealing with those families.⁵⁴⁶

The “multi-problem” idea represented an effort to explain why poverty and anti-social behavior persisted in a relatively prosperous economy. It preceded the idea of the “culture of poverty” popularized by Oscar Lewis in the late 1950s, as well as the embrace of the idea of a behavioral “underclass” decades later. Both ideas were deeply influential among policy makers in the late twentieth century.⁵⁴⁷ But the notion of a multi-problem family was an important predecessor that has received relatively little attention from historians. Before Lewis’s culture of poverty concept had worked its way into an emerging antipoverty movement in the early 1960s, the idea of the “multiproblem family” already described a population of people entrenched in poverty and anti-social behavior, and enmeshed in a web of legal and social service institutions, that both the notions of a culture of poverty and the underclass would subsequently attempt to explain. As Rowan’s article suggests, many of the key descriptive elements that would be incorporated into both the culture of poverty and the underclass were embraced in the 1950s by the St. Paul project—particularly the repetition of problems from one generation to the next. In so doing, it revived interest in a phenomena first described and

⁵⁴⁶⁵⁴⁶ A similar effort focused on the needs of “problem” families in England originated in the work of the Family Service Units during World War Two, volunteer organizations staffed by pacifists engaged in alternative service during the war. Though the St. Paul project and the English project had distinct origins, by the late 1950s their concerns had converged enough to be cited as a common literature. See Schlesinger, p. 4-9. For a study of the British effort, see Pat Starkey, *Families and Social Workers: The Work of the Family Service Units, 1940-1985* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

⁵⁴⁷ For an excellent discussion of research on poverty and its influence on policy, see Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). There is a voluminous literature on both the “culture of poverty” and the “underclass;” starting points are Michael Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), p. 16-35 and Herbert Gans, *The War Against the Poor: The Underclass and Antipoverty Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

studied by eugenicists in the late nineteenth century. But by focusing on family psycho-dynamics as its theory of causation, rather than genetics or culture, it was far more optimistic, as its promoters believed those dynamics could be shaped and changed, at least to the benefit of a younger generation.

The significance of the “multiproblem family” is not simply as a defining element of mid-century social welfare thought. Its origins and promoters are of equal interest, because they point to the critical role that the voluntary sector played in conceiving and disseminating the idea. This chapter will discuss the origin of the idea of the multi-problem family in a series of social service research and demonstration projects in St. Paul, Minnesota in the late 1940s and 1950s. It developed out of the efforts of a number of actors in the voluntary sector to rationalize social service delivery in the wake of the expansion of the welfare state in the 1930s. The specific notion of the “multi-problem family” was rooted in statistical examinations of patterns of use of social services in St. Paul by a small group of policy entrepreneurs that coalesced around Community Research Associates, a social welfare consultation company that enjoyed national prominence in the 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁸ For descriptions of the St. Paul study, also known as the Family Unit Report Study, and the subsequent Family Centered Project, see Leonard Rutman, “The Demonstration Project as an Instrument for Social Service Delivery Planning: A Case Study of the St. Paul Family Centered Project,” (Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1973); Mary Ostling, “The St. Paul Family Centered Project: In Perspective,” (Plan B Paper, University of Minnesota, 1976), SWHA. For a description of the influence of these projects, see Alfred J. Kahn, *Planning Community Services for Children in Trouble* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 366-374, and Kahn, “Service Delivery at the Neighborhood Level: Experience, Theory, Fads,” *Social Service Review* (Mar. 1976). For a brief discussion of these efforts in the context of an expanding “therapeutic state”, see Andrew Polsky, *The Rise of the Therapeutic State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 158-162. The project in St. Paul was one instance of the widespread interest in the idea of “rehabilitating” welfare clients in the 1950s. Jennifer Mittelstadt has detailed the embrace of this idea by the social welfare establishment, and its translation into public policy in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and in particular, the influence of the shifting racial and gender composition of the welfare population on that idea. Jennifer Mittelstadt, “The Dilemmas of the Liberal Welfare State, 1945-1964: Gender, Race and Aid to Dependent Children,” (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2000).

CRA birthed the idea of the multi-problem family, though it quickly lost control over its application and interpretation. Nonetheless, the role of the CRA, local voluntary fundraising organizations and foundations, and private family agencies in creating the idea demonstrates that “poverty knowledge” was formed not only at the higher recesses of academic, foundation, and federal institutions, but by also by secondary practitioners more concerned with social welfare planning and practice in local communities. An idea that came out of the organizational imperatives of the voluntary sector gained a life of its own as a way about thinking about the poor at mid-century and what needed to be done to help them.

Reorganizing Voluntarism

Community Research Associates grew out of the efforts of local community chests to reconcile themselves to Depression-era public welfare programs, as well as shrinking donations in the voluntary sector. Despite having been relieved of the task of attempting to support the financial needs of vast numbers of the unemployed, voluntary agencies and the Community Chests that supported many of them still sensed a diminished financial future, brought on by donor exhaustion from massive, early Depression fund drives, general economic decline, and increased tax burdens on higher-income donors who provided a key base of voluntary giving.⁵⁴⁹ As a CRA staffer later put

⁵⁴⁹ United Way of America, *People and Events: A History of the United Way* (Alexandria, Va.: United Way of America), p. 65-80. In fact, total funds raised by Community Chests regained their pre-Depression level by 1935, though many individual Chests still struggled. Scott Cutlip, *Fund Raising in the United States: Its Role in America's Philanthropy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965), p. 213

it, "Local Chests and Councils were crying for help."⁵⁵⁰ One outgrowth of this was an effort to achieve efficiencies within the voluntary sector, to reduce redundancies and streamline the social services that remained within the province of voluntary institutions. Community Chests and Councils of America, a national organization that provided research and consulting services to local chests, conducted over 90 surveys of local communities between 1934 and 1943, to help local chests assess the operations of their member agencies and suggest reorganizations. One of the earliest, in Hartford, Connecticut, noted the probable need for reorganization of local agencies prompted by "the emergence of the post-depression problem of defining the function of the private social agency in a completely changed milieu."⁵⁵¹

Bradley Buell, a social work administrator who had come to the national staff of the Chests from directing the local Chest of New Orleans, was the principal figure in the Chest survey effort, and eventually founded CRA in 1944 after serving several years as the executive editor of *Survey*, a general-interest social welfare periodical.⁵⁵² Buell recruited agency executives from different communities to serve on the Community

⁵⁵⁰ [Frank Greving], "The Sequence of CRA Conceptual Development," lecture, National Institute of Mental Health, June 18, 1963, Folder 244, Box 24, FCP.

⁵⁵¹ "Copy, Budget Principles" [1934 or 1935], Folder 83, Box 8, National Social Welfare Assembly Records, SWHA; A. A. Heckman interview with Virginia Kunz, May 4, 1990, Box 4, Heckman Papers, SWHA. Community Chests did not exert direct operational control over the myriad agencies they helped fund; but they gained a strong voice in the budgets of those agencies and played a major role in shaping the array of voluntary institutions in the nearly 800 communities where they existed by the end of World War Two.

⁵⁵² Buell's experience with surveys as a tool for reform had direct roots in the Progressive Era survey movement. He had been trained at the New York School of Philanthropy prior to World War One, and had worked on a survey of working conditions in the cigar industry under Mary Van Kleeck of the Russell Sage Foundation, and returned to the Foundation to work on a study of the US Employment Service after the war. But Buell's interests ran toward social work professionalism, and he was a key figure in organizing the American Association of Social Workers in 1921, serving as its associate director until he was ousted in the middle of controversy in 1923. Robert Perkins, "Bradley Buell," in Walter Trattner, ed., *Biographical Encyclopedia of Social Welfare* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 148-150; Stanley Wenocur and Michael Reisch, *From Charity to Enterprise: The Development of American Social Work in a Market Economy* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 120-124.

Chests and Councils national survey team, and a core group conducted many of the surveys together. In attempting to develop plans that would rationalize disparate voluntary and public agencies into a cohesive social welfare network, Buell and his associates began to notice the lack of standardized information on social problems. They looked enviously toward the public health field, which had pioneered the use of vital statistics as a lever to promote health reforms, and began to contemplate how the social welfare field might follow its lead.⁵⁵³ In the late 1930s, the survey team began to experiment with a statistical classification of social welfare problems that they termed the "Social Breakdown Index." Explicitly drawing on public health models, they claimed it as an "epidemiological concept" with which they could gather information on rates of delinquency, child neglect, divorce, or mental illness.⁵⁵⁴

Isolating such "social breakdown" in particular families was a byproduct of the survey team's methods. The team had used Social Service Exchanges as part of their research tools in the communities they visited. A tool originating in late nineteenth century charity, the Exchanges served as an index of families "known" to local social service agencies. They were developed originally to deter fraud in relief giving: an agency would report contact with a family to the central service, and an index card listing for the family would reveal if other agencies had "cleared" or reported other contact with the family. Some families had numerous contacts with social agencies, and thus extensive lists; as a later writer observed, "when this kind of family is cleared, the Social Service

⁵⁵³ Bradley Buell, *Community Planning for Human Services* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 301; Buell, "A Philosophy of Community Action," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, (July 1954): 457.

⁵⁵⁴ Buell, "Stamford Studies Itself," *Survey Midmonthly* (Sept. 1939): 270-273; Buell, "Social Breakdown: A Plan for Measurement and Control," *Community Chests and Councils Bulletin* no. 101, 1939; Buell, *Community Planning*, p. 254; Greving, p. 4-5.

Exchange pastes an extra extension slip to the clearance.”⁵⁵⁵ This common social work knowledge, of families with bulging clearance files, was driven home by the Community Chest and Council’s survey team’s work in Honolulu in 1940. Whereas on the mainland, they had brought a team consisting of a specialist who would survey the resources they were familiar with (medical care, child welfare, recreation, and so-on), the expense of the trip to Hawaii necessitated a slimmed-down team that would cover multiple assignments in different agencies. As A.A. Heckman, executive of the Family Service of St. Paul (a voluntary sector family service agency) and a chief collaborator in Buell’s surveys explained, in Honolulu the surveyors literally saw the same families a number of times.⁵⁵⁶

For Buell and Heckman, it confirmed two long-standing concerns in community organization: first, that a hard core of problem families existed; and that social agencies were not addressing the problem head on. Their primary worry was that scattered agencies dealt with only fragments of problems—a medical issue here, a child’s truancy there—and only on an individual level. If families were showing up in the files of multiple agencies, they reasoned, then the sum of all those fragments of problems must add up to a problem in the family itself.

Research on community organization dovetailed with the introspection of some voluntary agencies in the wake of the New Deal. For more forward-looking agencies, the disappearance of the “relief function”, and the signals from the community chests that streamlining was in order, spurred them to pay closer attention not only to defining new

⁵⁵⁵ Mazie F. Rappaport, “Clarifying the Service to Families with Many Problems,” *Journal of Social Work Process* v. 11 (1960)

⁵⁵⁶ Heckman interview.

programs, but to marshalling evidence of their effectiveness. New York City's Community Service Society, the pre-eminent casework agency in the country, received explicit instructions in from its board in 1942 to determine "how much casework is carried on, at what cost, and with what success."⁵⁵⁷ Family Service of St. Paul was under similar pressure. The agency had a sharper break with the past than most family service societies. It had become, in essence, the city public welfare agency in the early 1930s, merging its functions with public authority until a new Ramsey County Board of Welfare was established under the auspices of the Social Security Act of 1935. Family Service (changing its name from the United Charities) re-formed in 1935, and, given its recent past as a welfare agency, began to energetically distinguish itself from public welfare. Its program of family casework—one-on-one work by social workers on "adjustment" problems—specifically aimed at prevention of economic dependency. Its promotional material promised that the agency was "resting its case upon SAVING MONEY" by working with families before serious problems emerged, to ensure they did not become long-term economic burdens to the county. Material aid would be replaced by "intangible" aid: consultation with social workers about their problems; psychiatric consultation if deemed necessary; debt adjustment and family budget planning (one of the more popular programs); vocational counseling; and legal services. Underlying this array

⁵⁵⁷ A Community Service Society committee that included Yale sociologist John Dollard developed a "Distress-Relief Quotient" that a research committee at the CSS used extensively to try to generate an evaluation system that did not depend on caseworkers' judgment of their own results. See J. McVickar Hunt, "Measuring Movement in Casework," *Journal of Social Casework* (Nov. 1948): 343-351; Ann Shyne and Benjamin Brown, *Studies in Welfare and Health: Abstracts of Research at the Community Service Society* (New York: Community Service Society, 1967).

of offerings was the hope that the professional caseworkers could discover the family's underlying problems and treat them as well as the symptoms.⁵⁵⁸

The conviction that casework could provide more than palliative relief ran deeply through the entire profession, but the St. Paul agency was particularly focused on proving its case. A. A. Heckman, the executive of the agency (and Buell's collaborator), began a program in 1936 that started gathering data on the problems affecting their clients, and also began experimenting with systems to measure if the agency's services were helping the clients. Staff shortages and wartime projects stalled the program during the war. In 1946, the Wilder Charity, a local foundation, gave Family Service a grant that provided money for a mechanical tabulation of a broader statistical sample of their cases. The three most frequent problems among clients, revealed the study, were "difficulties in relationship between husband and wife" (35 percent) and "emotional instability affecting personal and family relations (23.4 percent), followed by "problems of financial planning" caused or complicated by "intellectual or emotional difficulty" (20.5 percent). Reassuringly, Heckman reported, it confirmed that families were bringing his agency exactly the type of problems his caseworkers were trained to deal with.⁵⁵⁹

More significantly, the tabulations revealed that many families suffered from a "constellation" of problems. The study results confirmed the common wisdom of family service: "Our data have enabled us to present graphically what we have always

⁵⁵⁸ Mark Haidet, *A Legacy of Leadership and Service: A History of Family Service of Greater St. Paul* (St. Paul: Family Service of Greater St. Paul, 1984): 34-35.

⁵⁵⁹ Heckman chose not to analyze the "short contact" cases of the agency, usually disposed of in one interview, a substantial portion of which could be assumed to be requests for financial aid, most of which were referred to the public assistance agency. A. A. Heckman, "Measuring the Effectiveness of Agency Services," *Journal of Social Casework* (Dec. 1948): 398; see also, A. A. Heckman and Alan Stone, "Forging New Tools," *Survey Midmonthly* (Oct. 1947): 267-270.

known—that families needing and seeking casework services usually present more than one symptomatic problem.”⁵⁶⁰ Heckman, in explaining the idea of a “constellation” to the board of Family Service, gave the example of the “A” family: a young husband and wife, a veteran and an Irish war bride. They were six months behind on their house payments and creditors were hounding them; they had been referred to Family Service through the Veteran’s Information Center to help them with indebtedness problems. The Family Service social workers discovered that the man “had no real idea of the role of husband and father,” and how to relate to his wife and children, that had put a strain on his wife and resulted in child behavior problems. The Family Service was working with them on indebtedness, but also on helping with child behavior problems, home management, and with the health of the harried wife. “To have services limited to just debt adjustment would have had little lasting value to family,” Heckman concluded, and the more intensive engagement with the family seemed justified.⁵⁶¹ The lesson of the “A” family was that agency services had to be more holistic, and that the social service system had to be able to meet a range of problems that underlay the “presenting” problem.

The piecemeal documentation of a “constellation” of problems within specific families, and the interest in the voluntary sector for reorganizing community resources, led Buell to propose a new study following World War Two. It would be a “Blueprint for Middletown” (invoking the prestige of Robert and Helen Lynd’s 1920s study of Muncie, Indiana), a super-survey that would sample the caseloads from all of a community’s

⁵⁶⁰ Heckman, “Measuring the Effectiveness of Agency Services.”

⁵⁶¹ Board of Directors, Family Service of St. Paul, Mar. 10, 1948. Box 2, Family Service of St. Paul Records (FSSP), SWHA.

social agencies in order to determine the nature of services provided.⁵⁶² Buell, with the assistance of Heckman, had conducted a study in Syracuse, New York in 1943 and 1944 under the auspices of *Fortune* magazine that aimed to gather a complete range of statistics to form the basis for postwar social planning. While affirming the need for basic economic security, the surveyors also recommended a generalized case work service under private auspices that could serve as a point of early diagnosis of individual and family behavior “which, if left untreated, might develop into chronic situations involving large expenditures and social losses of major importance.”⁵⁶³ In essence, the Syracuse survey recommended creating a super-agency on the model of voluntary family service societies, which would apply the expertise of the private sector’s trained professionals to clients of public agencies—while sparing private agencies the expense of income maintenance.

Buell was effusive about the *Fortune* project; writing to Heckman, he said “We’ll have the best basic data, and the best local groundwork, on which to figure out a total community plan, that anybody ever had. And the fact that Fortune has its eye on the material is not to be sneezed at.”⁵⁶⁴ But *Fortune* chose not to publish the results. Instead, Buell shifted his attention to a project under his own auspices. Forming Community Surveys, Inc., he proposed to the Grant Foundation of New York immediately after the

⁵⁶² “Blueprint for Middletown,” *Survey Midmonthly* (Oct. 1947): 284-285.

⁵⁶³ Syracuse-Onondaga Post-War Planning Council, *Health, Welfare and Leisure Time Activities* (Syracuse: Council of Social Agencies, 1944), p. 43. “Syracuse Tackles Its Future,” *Fortune* (May, 1943), p. 120-122; 156-160. The magazine followed up with two articles on urban land use and local tax reorganization, but the results of the social welfare survey were never explored in print; see “So You’re Going to Plan a City,” *Fortune* (Jan. 1944): 123-125, 170-174; “After the Plans, What?” *Fortune* (July 1944): 169-172, 214-231. *Fortune*’s sponsorship of the Syracuse survey is consistent with the magazine’s efforts to promote a mixed, public-private welfare state in other arenas. See Edward Berkowitz and Kim McQuaid, *Creating the Welfare State: The Political Economy of Twentieth-Century Reform* (New York: Praeger, 1980), p. 136-137.

⁵⁶⁴ Buell to Heckman, Jan. 31, 1944, “Surveys, Syracuse,” Reel 18, Heckman Papers.

war a plan for analyzing in depth the social service system of a single city in order to create a model for planning social service delivery. The *Survey*, reporting on the foundation's funding of the project, explicitly noted its potential usefulness for simplifying and unifying social services, and answering the call of "taxpayers and contributors [who] want to know why they have to support so many and such expensive agencies."⁵⁶⁵

With foundation funding in hand, Buell decided, in part because of his friendship with Heckman and the local family agency's orientation to research, to propose to use St. Paul as a case study. Corresponding with Charles Birt, executive director of the St. Paul Community Chest, he suggested that they could conduct "some kind of a formal demonstration of what can be done by good planning in the field of behavior and family disorganization. Might even rock the world!" Birt and Heckman were excited by the project, and Birt reported that he'd shared earlier Buell surveys with his Chest board and that they were "starved" for this kind of information. The project was approved in early 1948, and the goal a complete review of one month's intake at all public and private social agencies, 108 in all, in St. Paul, tabulated on IBM cards.⁵⁶⁶

As the interest of the Chest executives suggests, the primary appeal of what became known as the Family Unit Reporting System, or more generally, "the St. Paul project," was its potential to increase the efficiency of the social service sector. The task of the project was to track the incidence of social problems, and to create a standardized

⁵⁶⁵ "Blueprint for Middletown," p. 284. Community Surveys Inc. changed its name to Community Research Associates at some point in the late 1940s.

⁵⁶⁶ Charles Birt to Frank Rarig, Feb. 19, 1947, Folder 27, Box 3; Buell to Birt, Mar. 4, 1947; Birt to Buell, Mar. 8, 1947, Folder 240, Box 24, FCP. "St. Paul Will Undergo Social Service Check, First of Kind in U.S.," *St. Paul Dispatch*, June 30, 1948.

reporting system that could be used across various agencies for the collection of service statistics that could provide a clear picture of who was using what services. Heckman later compared it to financial accounting.⁵⁶⁷ A researcher at the Community Chest described it to Louis W. Hill, a grandson of railroad magnate James J. Hill and a conservative Republican state representative from St. Paul, as useful in “planning purposes in determining what services should be curtailed, what services should be expanded, and how existing services can be made more efficient.”⁵⁶⁸

The St. Paul Project showcased research and planning, and Buell’s primary interest was in process rather than results. Thus, even before the data was tabulated, he began planning a conference in late 1949 that would highlight the results of the study (whatever they were to be). But it was the results, in fact, that made the study distinctive, and one result in particular: that the CRA tabulation revealed that six percent of the families in St. Paul absorbed half of the social service expenditures of the community. This sub-group was what the study eventually termed “multi-problem families”: families who showed up in the records of multiple agencies dealing with “dependency” (monetary relief or unemployment) “maladjustment,” (crime, divorce, child abuse, illegitimacy) or “ill-health.” 6,466 families were deemed “multi-problem,” and of those, 1,964, or roughly two percent of St. Paul’s families, were deemed to have “major” problems in these areas. The majority of the cases were seen by public agencies, particularly the Ramsey County Welfare Board for public assistance and child welfare services; Community Chest agencies saw about 20 percent of the “maladjustment” cases.

⁵⁶⁷ Rutman, p. 81, 221n8.

⁵⁶⁸ William Mitchell to Louis W. Hill, Dec. 17, 1948, Folder 240, Box 24, FCP.

Despite the intensity of the research effort, there were a number of serious questions about the design and conduct of the project. Internal discussion pointed out some of the possible problems with the results. The researchers worried the most about underestimating problems, particularly in the nebulous “maladjustment” category. Others pointed to the possible inflation of statistics. One could become defined as one of the 6,466 “problem” families by having broken your leg and subsequently lost your job because of it, which would have been defined as problems of “ill-health, dependency, and situational maladjustment,” hardly the chronic dependency cases emerging as the target of the investigation.⁵⁶⁹ Frank Rarig, a former public welfare official who had moved to the Amos Wilder Charity, one of the financial backers of the St. Paul project, gave a more biting critique. As Buell’s team started to tabulate the data, Rarig expressed concerns that the project was being rushed and that the data gathering was rife with mistakes. More pointedly, he worried about the basic structure of the project: “The greatest weakness is the Family Unit Reporting System technique is that it reports the existence of problems only in relation to services requested or provided,” so that the universe of “problems” was defined only by services already in existence.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁹ Merrill Krughoff, “Summary of Major Findings of the Saint Paul F.U.R.S. Study,” Sept. 15, 1951, p. 3-4, Folder 178, Box 18, FCP.

⁵⁷⁰ Rarig to Birt, Mar. 3, 1949, Folder 240, Box 24, FCP. Rarig later argued that the staffs of the cooperating agencies hadn’t been well trained in gathering the material, and that “there is undoubtedly a high percentage of error in basic statistics.” Rarig to Buell, July 14, 1952, Folder 241, Box 24, FCP. Rarig’s criticism foreshadowed a stinging attack on CRA in the early 1960s that noted the “circularity” of defining problems by the services available in a community. Irving Lukoff and Samuel Mencher, “A Critique of the Conceptual Foundation of Community Research Associates,” *Social Service Review* (Dec. 1962): 437. Martin Rein disputed the definition of “service”, pointing out that some of the families receiving numerous services might simply be getting referred to and rejected from a number of agencies, and added, “Replications of this study are desperately needed.” Martin Rein, *Social Policy: Issues of Choice and Change* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 68.

Concerns about methodology did little to derail the enthusiasm of the project's planners for their results. Indeed, the impact of the research seemed mostly to confirm pre-existing ideas about a costly sub-group of dependent and disordered families, and the sense that the roots of the problems lay in the families themselves. Buell's study had even broken down the costs on a per-family basis (though the figures were for the total families served, not just the "multi-problem families"): \$52 per month for dependency, \$22 for health, and \$9 for maladjustment. Charles Birt of the St. Paul Community Chest saw a clear link between the data on family problems and potential savings for the community. If services could be coordinated to keep families together, he wrote Buell, they might be able to prevent future troubles that were "a continuing expense on the community and taxpayer."⁵⁷¹

Putting the family at the statistical center of the St. Paul study also tapped into growing concerns in postwar America over the vitality and stability of the family as a social institution. Birt hoped that the St. Paul study would confirm the importance of building strong families, ranking the issue with "Atomic Energy," "Britain's Economic Crisis," and the "Spread of Communism" and claimed that the "future of the American family is going to determine much of what is going to happen in the world of tomorrow." The interest in the family itself was not particularly novel. But the intensity of the examination of the family, nearly to the exclusion of external factors, was distinctive in the immediate postwar era, and characteristic of the highly publicized debates over juvenile delinquency in the 1950s.⁵⁷² The St. Paul study reflected that tendency. By

⁵⁷¹ Krugoff, "Summary of Major Findings;" Birt to Buell, Jan. 19, 1949, Folder 240, Box 24, FCP.

⁵⁷² Memo, Birt to Buell, Sept. 13, 1949. Folder 241, Box 24, FCP. For increasing concern about families in the United States during the 1950s, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the*

starting with the family as its statistical unit, the structure of the study determined its conclusions—that the problems were rooted in families.

The St. Paul study helped revive an interest in behaviorally deviant lower class families. The focus in to a distinct set of troubled families harkened back to nineteenth-century social science, in the eugenics of Richard Dugdale's study of the Jukes family. Dugdale, an amateur sociologist, conducted a study of poorhouse populations in upstate New York in late nineteenth century, where he found certain families consistently mired in poverty and criminality. The repetition of these problems from one generation to another indicated to Dugdale that there was a biological basis to them. Others refined and promoted Dugdale's insights over the next several decades in a popular eugenics movement that peaked in the 1920s, and was discredited by the Nazi eugenics of the 1930s.⁵⁷³ In St. Paul in the late 1940s, instead of turning to eugenics and genetics, though, the study helped build a growing consensus among social workers and social scientists that the psychodynamics of family would be the most fruitful area to intervene to prevent social problems such as crime and poverty.⁵⁷⁴ St. Paul researchers saw "maladjustment," which along with "dependency" formed the most worrisome aspects of the problems the study addressed, as a combination of "emotional disturbances and personality disorders as well as difficulties that arise out of crises due to external causes." They argued that social work during the previous decades had focused too exclusively on financial assistance, and "led many of them to assume that financial security per se would remove

Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, 1988), and on the relationship between families and delinquency in the same period, see James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 130-136.

⁵⁷³ Richard Dugdale, *The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease, and Heredity* (New York: Putnam, 1895); note the overlap between the CRA categories of "maladjustment," "dependency," and "ill-health."

⁵⁷⁴ O'Connor, 107-109.

the adjustment incapacity of a person or family.”⁵⁷⁵ In an expanding postwar economy, though, the continued presence of poverty and related social problems indicated to social workers that some causation had to lie in non-economic factors.

The St. Paul study struck a nerve immediately. The conference publicizing their work in late 1949 generated dozens of letters inquiring for the published material – often from local Community Chests or Councils of Social Agencies.⁵⁷⁶ Heckman gave a paper on the project to the 1950 National Conference of Social Work. Buell published *Community Planning for Human Services* in 1952 (based primarily on the research in St. Paul), which circulated widely. In these works, there is evident a shift in emphasis from a study of the organization of community resources to a focus on intervening in the lives of “multi-problem families” in order to restore them to a “higher level of functioning.” Buell himself continually blurred the lines between the community organization aspects of his survey and its implications for preventing the types of problems that cost communities so much. In the introduction to *Community Planning for Human Services* he declared that an attack on dependency, ill-health and maladjustment was “essentially a matter of logistics”—making sure that the right social services were brought to bear at the right time.⁵⁷⁷ For Buell and the others at Community Research Associates, this usually meant coordinating a fragmented social service sector so that service delivery could be channeled through a single source to a given family. As Heckman observed, St. Paul had enough social workers, but too many were in the wrong places; “existing agencies had to

⁵⁷⁵ Paul T. Beisser, “Maladjustment Among Families in St. Paul,” paper delivered to the National Conference on Appraising Family Needs, Sept. 23, 1949; Folder 283, Box 28, FCP.

⁵⁷⁶ See Birt to Robert MacRae, Mar. 2, 1950 and other letters in Folder 27, Box 3, FCP.

⁵⁷⁷ Buell, *Community Planning*, p. 6-7.

be redirected.” Reorganization would not only promote efficiency but would also solve social problems.⁵⁷⁸

This seemingly straightforward question of organization, though, presumed a consensus on the types of services that were valuable and on the proper locus of service delivery. Here, Buell and his associates saw the focus on the family as a point of intervention toward which community resources had to be directed. Moving from statistical correlation to a theory of causation, CRA helped reify the notion of “multiproblem families” as a social reality. As a later commentator put it, “Perhaps, inevitably, there has been a tendency in many quarters to act as though the multi-problem family is a diagnostic entity.”⁵⁷⁹ The problems within a given family, reasoned the researchers in St. Paul, probably exhibited some dynamic interaction (that illness and need for financial assistance were often related; or that many criminals seemed to come from poorer families), and that family dynamics helped explain why these problems impacted some families more than others. The focus on the family, and particularly family psychodynamics, also suggested that it was the expertise of the voluntary sector that would be most useful—these were exactly the type of problems Heckman had said his agency could solve. A later study discerned an explicit effort to place private agencies at the center of community planning.⁵⁸⁰ This is what Buell had proposed in Syracuse, and it was similar to suggestions the national FSAA gave local agencies on how to reintegrate themselves into a widened field of social welfare.⁵⁸¹ It was this nexus between

⁵⁷⁸ FCP Workshop Committee Minutes, May 19, 1953, Folder 7, Box 1, FCP.

⁵⁷⁹ Kahn, *Planning Community Services*, p. 366. See Gans, p. 61-65, for an analysis of how the idea of an “underclass” was similarly reified later in the century.

⁵⁸⁰ Rutman, p. 79-80.

⁵⁸¹ “Current and Future Directions in Family Service Program,” *Highlights* (February, 1949).

organizational and treatment goals that in part explains the appeal of the St. Paul study to both business-oriented community chest leaders and to social workers.

The efforts in St. Paul were part of a growing trend in the 1950s as social workers, particularly those in the public sector, began focusing on the possibilities of “rehabilitating” welfare clients to make them more self-sufficient.⁵⁸² The St. Paul study of 1948 spawned a series of projects in the 1950s that helped popularize the notion that a hard core of multi-problem families were at the center of contemporary social problems, and that by rationalizing community resources around intervention with these families, some mitigation of their problems would be possible. Community Research Associates, funded in part by the liberal Grant and Field Foundations, started three pilot projects, in rural Winona County, Minnesota; in San Mateo, California; and in Washington County, Maryland. These focused on, respectively, reducing public assistance dependency (particularly among the aged), maladjustment, and medical problems by reorganizing community resources and emphasizing the use of a coordinated social casework team in diagnosing family problems.⁵⁸³ In all of these projects, Buell began to stress the use of public institutions more thoroughly. In part, this was because the voluntary agencies that provided casework in many major cities were in short supply in places such as Winona County. But it was also clear, even in urban areas, that public institutions dealt with the vast majority of people who the projects focused on.

⁵⁸² Mittelstadt, ch. 3. The three most significant studies by Community Research Associates that were related to the St. Paul Family Unit Report Survey were: CRA, “The Prevention and Control of Dependency in Winona County, Minnesota” (New York: CRA, 1953); CRA, “The Prevention and Control of Indigent Disability in Washington County, Maryland” (New York: CRA, 1954); CRA, “The Prevention and Control of Disordered Behavior in San Mateo County, California,” (New York: CRA, 1954).

⁵⁸³ Ellen Gibson, “Handful of Families Uses Up Big Share of Welfare Dollars,” *Milwaukee Journal*, Mar. 2, 1952, p. 1; CRA, “The Prevention and Control of Disordered Behavior in San Mateo County,” p. 27-30, Folder 7, Box 14, Community Research Associates Records, SWHA. FCP Workshop Minutes, Apr. 12, 1957, Folder 10, Box 1, FCP.

The St. Paul Family Centered Project

The St. Paul study stimulated a local demonstration effort, the Family Centered Project that drew heavily on the leadership and resources of the voluntary sector in addressing the problem of multi-problem families. Under the leadership of Heckman, who left St. Paul Family Service in 1952 to head the local Louis W. and Maud Hill Family Foundation, and Charles Birt of the Community Chest, the project took the insights on community organization from the 1948-49 study and began in 1952 by trying to establish an experimental, centralized casework service that would work with families derived from the “multi-problem” rolls. Funding came from the Hill Family Foundation, and the project used the research department of the Amherst Wilder Charity throughout the duration of the study. It was explicitly framed as a preventative program, and one that ultimately would result in some “effectual whittling away at the supposedly irreducible load upon our private welfare funds and our tax supported institutions,” said one FCP staff member in a speech to the Dallas Council of Social Agencies.⁵⁸⁴ The St. Paul Community Chest, through the leadership of Charles Birt, was critical in securing the agreement of the voluntary agencies to participate—sometimes through arm twisting. The FCP caseworkers were borrowed from several private agencies such as Family Service of St. Paul, Jewish Family Service, and the Bureau of Catholic Charities, as well as public agencies such as the child welfare division of the Ramsey County Welfare Board, the Probation Department, and the visiting teachers program of the county school system.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁴ Irving Clark, “Attacking Social Dependency,” speech to the Annual Meeting of the Council of Social Agencies, Dallas, Texas, May 1952, Folder 284, Box 28, FCP.

⁵⁸⁵ See Rutman, p. 173.

The test pool of 140 multi-problem families were drawn from the families identified in the 1948 study, as well as the current caseload of the Child Welfare division of the Ramsey County Welfare Board. In assembling the caseload for the FCP, Project leaders found that multi-problem families may not have been as chronic as suspected; half of the most serious cases discerned by the 1948 study were no longer active at the Ramsey County Welfare Board. Some on the steering committee thought this was a serious point to consider, but Heckman dismissed it as interesting but not central to the question at hand, reasserting that “we know that the ‘core’ group families take a large proportion of our services.” Malcolm Stinson guessed that some families had moved, some were active with other agencies, and that for most, the period of intense crisis had passed as children grew older—but now the project would be facing the problems caused by the adult children, who did not show up in the original figures. Jewish Family Service of St. Paul, who hoped to focus on Jewish families from the 1948 study, found that for most of them the “family crisis has been softened by the passage of time” and struggled to find Jewish families who exhibited the full range of multiple problems for the study.⁵⁸⁶

For voluntary agencies, participation in the Family Centered Project involved blurring the lines between private and public. The distinctive hallmark of the FCP program in the 1950s was matching of what was then termed “aggressive casework” and the idea of the multi-problem family. The New York City Youth Board had pioneered aggressive casework in the late 1940s as a tool in preventing juvenile delinquency—caseworkers would seek out children at risk proactively, instead of waiting for families to come to casework agencies voluntarily. The FCP hired Alice Overton, a

⁵⁸⁶ FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Dec. 13, 1953, Folder 7, Box 1; and Feb. 28, 1955, Folder 8, Box 1, FCP; Malcolm Stinson, “Let’s Face the Facts,” Mar. 1, 1954, BoD 1954, Box 2, FSSP Records.

Youth Board worker, to develop their program aimed at families.⁵⁸⁷ But in order to gain access to the families in the project, the workers needed an excuse to approach them. They found it in the idea that such families had children in “clear and present danger” of abuse or neglect (usually the latter), and the bulk of the clients were drawn from the children’s services rolls of the RCWB.⁵⁸⁸ Thus, though Project workers would approach under the cloak of voluntarism, the police power of the state ultimately lurked behind them, for workers could invoke the implied threat of separating the children from the family. One worker specifically told the mother of an ADC family she approached for the project that if there were no improvement in the family situation, “I would have no choice but to request the court to remove her children.”⁵⁸⁹

For the social workers involved in the project, and particularly those from voluntary agencies, such an approach to the FCP families was a shock. Voluntary agencies lacked state authority, and could not compel their clients to act on their advice, nor did they have a rationale for reaching out to families who did not seek their help. Voluntarism was also a conviction of caseworkers who drew more heavily on psychological theory to inform their work – clients needed to desire to change voluntarily in order for the relationship with the worker to be successful. As one critic of this stance characterized it, “Caseworkers accustomed to responding to a request for help and respecting the client’s right to work on his own problem looked askance at what seemed

⁵⁸⁷Family Centered Committee Meeting, Jan. 22, 1954, Folder 1, Box 1, FCP; See discussion of the NYC Youth Board’s work at the Family Service of St. Paul, Board of Directors Minutes, Dec. 1, 1952. Box 2, FSSP Records. The caseworkers on the FCP were drawn almost evenly from voluntary and public agencies, despite the fact that *all* the 140 families in the Project had current contact with a public agency. Alice Overton, Katherine Tinker, et al. *Casework Notebook* (St. Paul, MN: Family Centered Project, 1957), p. 3, 5.

⁵⁸⁸ FCP Workshop Minutes, Sept. 13, 1957, Folder 10, Box 1, FCP.

⁵⁸⁹ “H. Family #190,” Folder 140, Box 14, FCP.

like intrusion and force.” “Aggressive” casework with multi-problem families drew voluntary agency workers into a new relationship with a somewhat different set of clients, one they were not entirely comfortable with. When some workers expressed their worries to Overton, she told them that “whether the caseworker wants to disassociate herself from authority or not, in the eyes of the client she is in fact so associated and looked upon as a representative of authority.”⁵⁹⁰ The FCP empowered its workers, through the “clear and present danger” to the children of the Project families, to insert themselves into these peoples’ lives as agents of community concern.⁵⁹¹

The clientele of the Family Centered Project were also somewhat different than those found in most voluntary agencies after World War Two. Since the advent of more widespread public responsibility for financial relief, voluntary agencies had been slowly moving away from dealing with the most impoverished people in their communities. There remained some overlap. Dawson Bradshaw, the director of St. Paul Family Service, claimed that multi-problem families were not unusual at his agency, and that he could pick out 20 families from his caseload who were “as multi-problem as the Project families.” However, the social workers from his agency found that the FCP clients had a greater “spread and range of pathology” than their typical clients, and tended to be more hostile to authority and in greater conflict with “community standards.” Workers from the

⁵⁹⁰ FCP Discussion Group Minutes, June 4, 1954, Folder 8, Box 1, FCP.

⁵⁹¹ Helen A. Wisgerhof, “Casework in Non-voluntary Referrals,” *Journal of Social Casework* (Nov. 1946): 278-279. That caseworkers were worried about authoritative casework suggests that the “normalizing agenda” of social workers discussed by Andrew Polsky did not have a consensus among professional social workers in the 1940s and early 1950s, accustomed as they were to the voluntarism of private agency practice. Polsky, p. 4. However, the enthusiasm with which Project workers ultimately embraced “aggressive casework” certainly indicates its appeal. Moreover, occasional suggestions by Heckman (ignored by his fellow Project leaders) that the public welfare department ought to keep marginal families under some sort of observation, even when not on welfare, point to the more repressive aspirations of some of the promoters of the Project. FCP Project Discussion Group Notes, Sept. 9, 1953; Folder 7, Box 1, FCP.

Bureau of Catholic Charities also found them “significantly below the group of families that could come and ask for help.”⁵⁹² A new worker from Jewish Family Service had a “dazed reaction” upon reading the case files he would be responsible for in the Family Centered Project.⁵⁹³

As the reactions of the voluntary agency workers indicate, the Family Centered Project had an uneasy relationship with the mainstream current of professional casework, which continued to stress the therapeutic relationship as the medium for the delivery of all the more concrete services an agency might have to offer. Increasingly, casework agencies had come to rely on psychiatric consultation for added insight into dealing with the emotional problems of their clients, or referred clients to psychiatric resources elsewhere. In the FCP, however, the more immediate problems of material deprivation and complicated social relationships, and the stress on the family environment, drew the caseworkers more toward older models of “social diagnosis” elaborated by social work pioneer Mary Richmond in the 1910s. Alice Overton and the New York City Youth Board had made “incidental” use of psychiatric consultation in their experiments, and her personal orientation was toward dealing with the social environment of the families first. Heckman himself questioned psychiatry’s focus on the individual, and frequently criticized exclusively psychiatric approaches. Dr. Rowe, the consulting psychiatrist at Family Service, also warned the project that psychiatry was not the “cure all” many hoped for, and that psychiatric insights should be balanced with a more “social” approach. As caseworkers began dealing with the families, Overton reported that they felt “inundated by such a tremendous range of general difficulties, that they had not yet

⁵⁹² FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Jan. 7, 1955; Jan. 21, 1955; Feb. 4, 1955. Folder 8, Box 1, FCP.

⁵⁹³ “Conference with Mr. Shulman, Dec. 22, 1954”, Folder 219, Box 22, FCP.

reached the point where they could consider (and probably should not focus their attention on) the deeper emotional problems of family members.”⁵⁹⁴

Such families seemed daunting, but potentially helpable. Bradshaw gave an example of a seeming success story to his Board of Directors in 1956. The family in question had been a Family Service client from 1938 to 1948. Both parents in the family had come from “seriously deprived families with low social and moral standards,” and first showed up in the records of the Ramsey County Welfare Board in 1936, four months after their marriage. They went on to be “heartily disliked by a series of workers” at the Board. By 1938 they were deep in debt, their three children had serious health problems, and the mother’s behavior was erratic and delusional. The Wilder Child Guidance Clinic had recommended that the only way to help the children was to remove them from their home. The family had not had any reluctance to seek out help; the mother was receiving counseling from three different ministers and the Salvation Army, none of whom were having any luck. At one point, twenty-two people were trying to help the family—exactly the type of multi-problem family, and community organization problem, that Heckman and Buell had conceived of in shaping the 1948 study. Family Service had dropped the case after 10 years with little hope for improvement, but re-admitted the family as part of the Family Centered Project. The caseworker spent two months and fifteen interviews convincing all the agencies involved to allow Family Service to be the coordinator of the case. After a year of work with the caseworker, the family showed signs of improvement: nobody had complained to the police about the mother, the neighbors had not complained about the family, the father was holding two jobs, and the children were attending school

⁵⁹⁴ FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Nov. 6, 1953, Folder 7; Nov. 20, 1953; June 18, 1954; Oct. 22, 1954, Folder 8, Box 1, FCP. Heckman Oral History, pt. 5, p. 12.

regularly. Bradshaw attributed the improvement to the “concentrated attention” that the family received from the caseworker.⁵⁹⁵

Case discussion groups among Project workers provide insight into other families and how social workers assessed their problems and prospects for recovery. The “D” household consisted of a married couple, their six children and one (illegitimate) grandchild. The Project caseworker, from Jewish Social Services, characterized the “D” family as being “typical” of the “hard core” families: they were poorly educated, unskilled, and apparently intellectually limited, more susceptible to illness due to poor nutrition and inadequate housing—but also fell back on illness as an excuse for their financial dependency on the county. The mother’s family had been chronic recipients of public assistance; the family itself had received public assistance for years; their oldest son, married with a family of his own, had recently gone on public assistance. Limited intellect and “lack of stimulation or experience of a constructive way of living” were, in the opinion of the caseworker, holding the family back from financial independence. The case notes reveal a physically weak and intermittently employed father, the oldest daughter with an illegitimate child, the youngest son in trouble at school and with the probation office. The mother, on the other hand, was admitted to having “excellent” money management skills, and helped maintain a nearly middle-class level of consumption by occasionally going back into the workforce (and not revealing the outside income) to supplement the family’s public assistance. The father was “master of the house only when drunk.” “Rigid authoritarian methods” were used to discipline the children, though to outsiders, the parents were quite protective of their children.

⁵⁹⁵ Board of Directors Minutes, Jan. 6, 1956, Box 2, FSSP.

The family received the caseworker cordially, having known her from her earlier job at a local community center. But they were unsure of who she was representing during her visit, and since they distrusted the Welfare Board and the parole office, they kept her at arm's length. Still, she believed there was evidence they would accept her, though her role was still confused; "Sometimes I am called Eleanor, sometimes Mrs. Felker, and other times 'that lady.'" Her plan for the family was to be there to help them with emergency situations that came up with their children; to help the family appreciate the "extent and nature of their children's varying problems" and help them see more "realistically" their roles as parents; and to help them discover the satisfactions of "working and being truly more independent." On the latter, though, she decided to focus her attention not on the parents, but on the 15-year-old son Daniel, to put him in touch with community resources to help him discover his work aptitudes and to find him part-time work that would be rewarding and put him on the track to self-support. Thus, through a mixture of intensive time with the family, the focus of a single worker, counseling on parent-child relations, and connections with community facilities, even the most hard core of multiproblem families might have their problems curtailed.⁵⁹⁶

Promotion, Influence, and Reaction

By confirming the experiences of social workers, and offering a solution that drew on social work practice, the St. Paul Study, and the Family Centered Project achieved wide currency in the 1950s. The organizers and staff of the Study and the FCP

⁵⁹⁶ "Case Study—Felker, 'D' Family," Sept. 16, 1954, Folder 130, Box 13, FCP. The actual case records of the Project were not preserved. This case is drawn from the minutes of monthly case seminars where Project workers would present a case for discussion among their fellow social workers.

were relentless promoters; one consultant described the “tremendous zeal of all those involved, particularly the project staff and the case workers and supervisors assigned to it.”⁵⁹⁷ In describing the work of the Family Centered Project, they continuously invoked social worker’s day-to-day experience to connect to the project’s work with multi-problem families. As Beulah Compton of the FCP told the Council of Social Agencies in Moline, Illinois,

It is the kind of family with which you are all thoroughly familiar. You have carried them in your caseload, you have devoted long conferences to them and you have spotted them in your budget figures and wondered whether they would ever cease being a burden on the community and whether the unhappiness and misery they are experiencing will ever come to an end.⁵⁹⁸

Another workers used more colloquial phrasing: “I think we can safely assume that all of us are thinking about the same families when we use the term ‘troublesome families on relief.’”⁵⁹⁹ Social workers were not the only people who recognized what the CRA study encapsulated. The director of a mental health clinic in Georgia said the study gave a “clear cut indication of the generation-to-generation sequence of recurrent problems. Most of us working on a community level sooner or later vaguely suspected this.” Rowan’s *Saturday Evening Post* article, after describing the particularly criminal O’Kasick family, with “fifteen bulging files dating back nineteen years” at the District Court, and with \$20,000

⁵⁹⁷ Herschel Alt, “Report of Consultation, Family Centered Project of St. Paul,” June 1955, p. 11. FCP Folder 1, Box 14, Wilder Foundation Records, Minnesota Historical Society, Minneapolis. The zeal did not extend to their colleagues at the agencies where the caseworkers were drawn from. Other staff at the Family Service Society called it the “self centered project”, while Ramsey County Welfare Board case worker supervisors argued there was nothing new about the project, and that anybody could be more effective if they carried caseloads of twenty rather than of hundreds. FCP Discussion Group, Jan. 7, 1955, Mar. 4, 1955, Folder 8, Box 1, FCP.

⁵⁹⁸ Beulah Compton, “The Story of the Family Centered Project,” speech to Council of Social Agencies, Moline, IL, Sept. 9. 1959.

⁵⁹⁹ Malcolm Stinson, “Troublesome Families on Relief,” Oct. 30, 1954, Folder 28, Box 284, FCP.

in welfare expenditures over the years observed, "It was obvious that here was one of those families which represent a millstone around the neck of civilized mankind, and that unless society intervened promptly but wisely all the maladjustment and general pathology would be transmitted to another generation."⁶⁰⁰ The "6 percent of multi-problem families who absorbed half of the services" became almost a mantra that gave statistical and conceptual life to social worker's most frustrating cases.

This mantra was circulating at the same time anthropologist Oscar Lewis was conceiving of a "culture of poverty" that explained persistent, intergenerational patterns of illegitimacy, lack of impulse control, a "high tolerance for psychological pathology," and so on, in poor families.⁶⁰¹ CRA workers did notice the seeming repetition of the problems across generations, and the distance of their clients from "middle class institutions."⁶⁰² At least one project member described such patterns as a matter of "culture", i.e., "the rules of the game of life" that are passed from parents to children.⁶⁰³ But the project workers put more energy into distinguishing themselves from earlier, eugenic explanations. As the *Casework Notebook* published by the project stated, "chronic" cases did exhibit "the recurrence of problems from year to year or even from generation to generation," but immediately clarified "we mean here social conditioning rather than physical heredity." Malcolm Stinson admitted that the FCP might be construed as similar to Dugdale's study

⁶⁰⁰ Leonard Maholick, "Mobilizing Therapeutic Potentials in the Community," *Mental Hygiene* (1958): 237-238; Rowan, p. 13. The continuity between Rowan's (or the *Post* editors') language and descriptions of the "underclass" 30 years later is striking; see, for instance, Chicago Tribune Staff, *The American Millstone: An Examination of the Nation's Permanent Underclass* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1986).

⁶⁰¹ Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," in Daniel P. Moynihan, ed., *On Understanding Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), p. 191-192; see also, Lewis, *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1959); O'Connor, p. 117-123.

⁶⁰² "The Family Centered Project of St. Paul Through the Workers' Eyes", Minnesota State Welfare Conference, March 16, 1959, Minnesota State Historical Society.

⁶⁰³ Stinson, "Let's Fact the Facts."

of the Jukes family in the late nineteenth century, but he stressed that the process of reproducing behavior was social, not biological.⁶⁰⁴ Overton saw the project in abstract medical terms, preventing “social infection.”⁶⁰⁵ Poor marital relations or misguided child rearing practices could account for some of the problems—without intervention, children could learn and replicate those dysfunctional patterns. Though such an understanding was concurrent with contemporary developments in social science, as Alice O’Connor has shown, FCP workers practiced a home-grown version that drew more exclusively on psychological concepts that had filtered through social casework rather than a direct reading of contemporary sociology or anthropology.⁶⁰⁶

Perhaps in an effort to avoid any eugenic overtones, the Family Centered Project rarely discussed race as a factor in families’ multiple problems. As a number of authors have shown, race became a central element in shaping public perceptions of welfare in the postwar era, beginning in some places immediately after the World War Two.⁶⁰⁷ But in statistics on the project, racial characteristics were never mentioned, though this was not unusual in the period. How it impacted the concern over social services in St. Paul is unclear. Race rarely surfaced even in confidential, informal discussion of Project objectives, though it is clear from fragmentary case records that several of the FCP

⁶⁰⁴ *Casework Notebook*, p. 6; Stinson, “Let’s Face the Facts.”

⁶⁰⁵ FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Jan. 22, 1954, Folder 7, Box 1, FCP.

⁶⁰⁶ Andrew Polsky notes the isolation of social work literature from other academic disciplines in this period; see Polsky, p. 160. The bibliography of the *Casework Notebook* is a case in point; the material listed was almost exclusively drawn from social work sources; exceptions included an article by Erik Erikson on ego psychology and another by Ernest Burgess on “Economic, Cultural, and Social Factors in Family Breakdown.” Earlier CRA studies, such as the one in Syracuse, and occasional statements by Buell nodded to 1920s University of Chicago urban sociology and the “disorganization” of rural migrants to urban environments as an explanation for anti-social behavior; see Buell, “Marriage in the Modern World,” *Journal of Social Hygiene* [1947]: 214-219.

⁶⁰⁷ Mittelstadt, p. 88, notes the general absence of race in social work research in the 1950s, and O’Connor, p. 121, notes a similar absence in Oscar Lewis’s own work. On the racialization of welfare politics, see Winifred Bell, *Aid to Dependent Children* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 63-75.

families were either Mexican or African American. It is possible that race was not a prime cause for concern in St. Paul in the late 1940s in the way that it was in Louisiana, Georgia, or even New York City. African Americans remained less than two percent of Ramsey County's population of 355,000 in 1950. A study of "chronic" general assistance cases in St. Paul in 1948 determined that the numbers of chronic, non-white general assistance cases was too small to have any predictive value. On the other hand, African Americans had taken work relief in greater numbers, proportionally, than whites in St. Paul during the 1930s. African Americans were concentrated and more visible in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and despite their small numbers, segregation and discrimination was rampant.⁶⁰⁸ The black population of Ramsey County increased from 4,182 to 5,748 from 1940 to 1950, as defense industry jobs opened to African Americans during World War Two, and the African American population continued to increase between 1950 and 1970.⁶⁰⁹ It was clear that most of the families the Family Centered

⁶⁰⁸ For examples of non-white FCP clients, see "Conference with Mrs. Felker, Jewish Family Service," Dec. 1, 1954, Folder 219, Box 22, and "The G. Family, Case #34," Sept. 12, 1955, Folder 131, Box 13, FCP. The conclusion on race and public assistance is in Ethel Harrison, *Identifying the Potentially Chronic Case at Intake: An Analysis of Recipients of General Assistance in Ramsey County* (St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1955), p. 66; on segregation and discrimination in Minnesota, see Governor's Interracial Commission, *The Negro Worker in Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN, 1945) and Governor's Interracial Commission, *The Negro and His Home in Minnesota* (St. Paul, 1947). One of the few explicit discussions of race in the FCP files was a series of four cases where white daughters of FCP clients had either had children by, or were socializing with, black or Mexican men or boys. Mary Pettee, a Family Service caseworker, put the cases to the group for discussion, asking, among other questions, "What methods should be employed in striking a balance between racial tolerance and the observance of traditional and community feelings regarding socializing between the races? ... Both Mrs. W. and Mrs. K have some awareness of their daughters' association with negro boys, but not full awareness.... Should the dangers signs be brought to the attention of parents?" "Case Studies-Pettee," Dec. 12, 1954, Folder 131, Box 13, FCP.

⁶⁰⁹ Census figures from Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Study No. 00003, "Historical, Demographic, Economic and Social Data: The United States, 1790-1960," (Anne Arbor: ICPSR), Web edition. June Holmquist, ed., *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1981), p. 84.

Project dealt with were white. What color the "multi-problem families" were in the eyes of St. Paul generally is difficult to assess.

One of the few African-American families explicitly identified by Project workers reveals that the workers' eyes were drawn to familiar themes in analysis of black families: illegitimacy and self-hatred. The "W" family was headed by the mother, who had been married a number of times and had children by several different men, one of whom she was not married to. The three of the five children who were of school age tested at low I.Q.s, and the oldest daughter had been placed in a special school. The principal of the youngest child described him as "quite a character." It was primarily the number of men still in Mrs. W's life that most concerned the social worker (again lent to the Project by Jewish Social Services). This, along with the fact that Mrs. W expressed a desire not to live in a black neighborhood, marked her in the caseworkers' eyes as "reflecting an estimate of herself as a social outcast." Perhaps if the family was encouraged to live in a black neighborhood, there would be more social pressure from other women who would, in the social worker's words, "fuss about their menfolks gathering there." Though Overton commented on the case record that the caseworker had never had any experience working with "Negro families at this social level" and was probably distrusted because she was white and Jewish, they still hoped for progress: they were sure that the mother would not want her daughter to follow in her path, and would try to perhaps to try to convince the mother to channel her relations with men in a way that would not damage the children (as

the Project workers' were convinced was the case). Nonetheless, there were more question marks than hopeful signs in the case record.⁶¹⁰

Social workers embraced the idea of the "multi-problem family" for similar reasons to their embrace of the "culture of poverty" in the 1960s. Both offered a scientific explanation for the persistence of poverty and "maladjustment" in a prosperous society, and an optimistic solution in spite of heretofore intractable problems. The multi-problem family concept, however, was more directly linked to the use of social casework than the culture of poverty would be. The FCP's *Casework Notebook* was enormously popular, and was published in Spain, Japan, Sweden, the Netherlands, and England. As with many aspects of the FCP, and rehabilitative casework in general, its seeming innovativeness in dealing with such families made it widely popular, though during the time it gained in popularity, there was little evidence of its effectiveness.⁶¹¹ The term multi-problem family was grouped with other language, some originating with juvenile delinquency programs or from other welfare experiments, such as "hard to reach" families, "difficult" families, or "hard core" cases, all of which identified a strata of people served by social agencies who became the target of policy interventions in the 1950s. It cropped up in places far from St. Paul, such as in the Family Society of Wilmington, Delaware, where executive secretary Anne Bender explained to her Board that in 1955 a third of their caseload were "multi-problem families" and in 1959 discussed a case exemplifying a "hard-core" family who

⁶¹⁰ "Overton with Mrs. Felker," Dec. 1, 1954, Folder 219, Box 22, FCP. On "self-hatred" as a mode of analysis of African-American behavior in the postwar period, see Daryl Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 82-85.

⁶¹¹ Rutman, p. 171-172.

used a high percentage of community resources with their “multiple problems.”⁶¹²

Charles Birt attributed much of this to the influence of the St. Paul project; “something is stirring all over the country,” he claimed.⁶¹³ Part of the attraction was the semi-scientific optimism of the idea. Not only was it confirmed by statistics, but the casework methods nurtured in private agencies seemed to point the way to untangling the problems of these families. The 1956 and 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act, that encouraged states to provide social services aimed at strengthening family life, aimed precisely at the types of familial dysfunctions that were presumed to lie at the base of multi-problem families. In fact, the lobbyist for the American Public Welfare Association “mentioned specifically the Buell Study of St. Paul and problems of successive generations with multiple problems” when in Congress lobbying for the 1956 Amendments.⁶¹⁴ Arthur Flemming as Eisenhower’s Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare promised the biennial meeting of the Family Service Association of America that the administration

⁶¹² Board of Directors Minutes, Family Society of Wilmington/Family Service of Northern Delaware, Jan. 17, 1956; Jan. 20, 1959, Children and Families First Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

⁶¹³ Kermit Wiltse, a social work professor at the University of California who ran several pilot projects with Aid to Dependent Children clients in the 1950s, coined the term “hopeless” families, though his phrase was meant to reflect how social workers viewed them, not the prognosis of clients themselves. See Wiltse, “The Hopeless Family,” *Social Work* (Oct. 1958): 12-22. Maybelle Bert, “Challenge of the Difficult Family,” *Public Welfare* (July 1957): 107-111; FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Mar. 7, 1958, Folder 10, Box 1, FCP.

⁶¹⁴ Marie Lane to Loula Dunn, Jan. 11, 1956, Folder 8, Box 27, American Public Welfare Association Records, SWHA; Charles Gilbert, “Policy-Making in Public Welfare: The 1962 Amendments,” *Political Science Quarterly* (June 1966): 204; see Mittelstadt generally. An influential demonstration project begun in the late 1950s at the University of Michigan’s School of Social Work by Wilbur Cohen focused on “multiproblem” families receiving public assistance in Washtenaw County, and cited the St. Paul study’s findings and conceptualization to confirm their own discovery of “a relatively small group of families” who absorbed much of Washtenaw County’s welfare funds. The results of this study helped convince Cohen to push for increased social service expenditures when he entered the Kennedy Administration, which helped create the emphasis on social services in Kennedy’s “welfare reform” legislation that produced the 1962 Public Welfare Amendments. Wilbur Cohen and Sydney Bernard, *The Prevention and Reduction of Dependency* (Ann Arbor, MI: Washtenaw County Dept. of Social Welfare, 1961), p. 9-12; Edward Berkowitz, *Mr. Social Security: The Life of Wilbur J. Cohen* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press), p. 108-109.

would use the “family centered approach” in its planning, though the reporter for the *New York Times* noted “there is no clear understanding of what this means.”⁶¹⁵

Politically, the attraction of the FCP and the later federal amendments was its potential to reduce welfare and social service expenditures. The participation of the Ramsey County Welfare Board, for instance, had been procured due to the Board’s interest “the possibilities of lower financial expenditures due to such efforts.”⁶¹⁶ But the prospects for saving money through social services were dim at best. An article on the St. Paul project in *Nation’s Business*, the publication of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, stressed increased value for expenditures—“In the long run your community may spend less money under such a system, but again, it may not, for sometimes it pays to expand.” Frank Rarig of the Wilder Foundation chastised project leaders for suggesting it would save money. “Any program of prevention and control” of the problems that the St. Paul study examined, he argued, “will require large amounts of additional funds.” As others have shown, advocates of increased social service spending on the federal level also dodged the question of costs or stressed increased efficiency over reduced expenditures. But despite Rarig’s criticism, well into the late 1950s project leaders remained convinced that their project would pay off, both by saving welfare dollars in the long run, and by “the growth of a better community.”⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁵ Bess Furman, “Family Life Aim of U.S. Welfare,” *New York Times* (Apr. 3, 1959), p. 28.

⁶¹⁶ FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Mar. 4, 1955. Folder 8, Box 1, FCP. The RCWB had been accused in the late 1940s of being more liberal with public assistance than neighboring Minneapolis, and the Board may have been particularly cost conscious when the Project was proposed. Amherst H. Wilder Research Department, “Comparison of Governmental Expenditures for Public Assistance, Child Welfare and Medical Care, Ramsey and Hennepin Counties, 1948” (St. Paul, March 1950), p. 1.

⁶¹⁷ Edith Stern, “Broken Lives and Dollar Patches,” *Nation’s Business* (Mar. 1950): 71; Rarig to Buell, July 14, 1952; Family Centered Committee Minutes, Nov. 7, 1957, Folder 1, Box 1, FCP. See Mittelstadt, 88-

Increased administration and assistance costs, however, seemed nearly inevitable. One of the central elements of the project was significantly reduced caseloads for the project's social workers, a model that, if extended to entire agencies, would have resulted in substantially higher expenditures for salaries. In addition, project data soon indicated that families associated with the FCP project actually got *more* public assistance while involved with the program. The reasons were relatively clear. With low caseloads, Project workers had the time and motivation to help their clients "succeed". One initial, concrete step was to make sure that their clients were receiving everything they were entitled to under public assistance, and to act as intermediaries for their clients in negotiating with other agencies, particularly public assistance, in securing better assistance. One client reported that "the best thing [my worker] did was let me know I wasn't begging, that whatever we were getting from the welfare was something we were due." Another said that her worker told her, "'Don't be cold this winter, if you need fuel, ask for it – don't be cold.' We were warm but that made me feel a lot better."⁶¹⁸ Though FCP workers also worried about clients manipulating them to gain leverage on public bureaucracies, by and large they saw improving the material conditions of their clients as part of a trade-off to induce behavioral change.⁶¹⁹

90, on welfare advocates avoiding the issue of the probability of increased social service spending in trying to reduce dependency.

⁶¹⁸ On the increase in assistance costs for FCP clients, see Beverly Ayers, "Economic Dependency in FCP Families: Can it Be Reduced?" (Greater St. Paul Community Chests and Councils, 1961), p. 53-54. FCP workers, it was explained, spent more on their clients to "get family up to basic level of necessities." Family Centered Committee Minutes, Apr. 24, 1958. Parents' Advisory Group Transcript, Feb. 9, 1959, p. 23. Folder 163, Box 17, FCP. Felicia Kornbluh has shown how AFDC mothers in New York in the 1960s availed themselves of social workers' help and 'discretion' in navigating welfare bureaucracies. Felicia Kornbluh, "Welfare Rights Between Law and Social Work," paper presented at the Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA, April 2001.

⁶¹⁹ FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Nov. 2, 1956, Folder 10, Box 1..

The increase in public assistance among Family Centered Project families was one of a number of frustrations with the project. As with most attempts to elicit concrete data from social work practice, research on the Project's effectiveness was fairly intangible. On the basis of a scale of "movement" derived from social workers' own evaluations of their clients, project researchers determined that 65.3 percent of the families showed positive change, 18.7 percent showed no change, and 16 percent showed negative change. But as Charles Birt admitted, "findings about improvement are often inferential rather than actual."⁶²⁰ Some clients certainly appreciated the increased resources and dealing with a worker who was sympathetic and not simply interested in the family budget. As one client said to project leaders, "This one welfare worker came in and I was upset at the time and I started to talk to him and tell him a lot of different things, and he said I'm not interested in your problems or your children ... He just came to talk about the budget... I was so upset.... But after that – the other ones I had contact with, why they all seemed to be alright. Of course I mostly had the one from the Project, and she's been awfully nice."⁶²¹ A review of clients' own evaluations of the project after one year reveals some plausible improvements, mostly in the area of self-esteem and self-confidence, or greater awareness of the needs of their children. On the issues of concern to the Project, though, the evaluations are less reassuring. A number of women mention that one of the ways family tensions were reduced were by leaving a spouse, hardly the

⁶²⁰ Ludwig Geismar and Beverly Ayres, *Patterns of Change in Problem Families: A Study of the Social Functioning and Movement of 150 Families Served by the Family Centered Project* (St. Paul, 1959), p. v, 7.

⁶²¹ Parents' Advisory Group Transcript, Feb. 9, 1959, Folder 163, Box 7, FCP.

goal of the framers.⁶²² Moreover, workers themselves realized that moving families off of welfare would be difficult, and set their sights for lower standards of “improvement.” In the case of the “D” family, cited above, for instance, the worker’s starting point to encourage self-support was not to get the parents off of public assistance, but to help the teenage son get some positive work experience. Contact with the families on the ground made for more modest goals.⁶²³

The original intent of the FCP founders, that the project would show the need for the reorganization of the social service structure, was lost in the enthusiasm for the concept of the multi-problem family and experimenting with the technique of aggressive casework. Heckman routinely reminded the steering committee that the project needed to focus on rationalizing the manner in which clients were diagnosed and treated by social service providers.⁶²⁴ But the committee, dominated by agency executives, social workers, and psychiatrists, showed much more interest in the nature of the families and how to approach them. Moreover, reorganizing community resources would impact the operations of the family agencies involved in the study. Despite their willingness to experiment, voluntary agency leaders would not let their caseloads be dominated by families whose prospects for improvement were dim. Nor would they easily cede functions to the type of centralized casework intake agency that Heckman envisioned. Maintaining the distinct programs of voluntary institutions was a guarantee that “the

⁶²² “Evaluations of Family Centered Casework,” Case 4, Case 25, Case 27, Case 45, Case 93, Case 102. Folder 138, Box 15, FCP. As with the Parents’ Advisory Group, not every family participated in the client evaluations, which were most likely elicited from the least resistant, and thus more favorable, to the project.

⁶²³ FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Jan. 7, 1955, Folder 8, Box 1, FCP.

⁶²⁴ FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Apr. 27, 1954, Folder 7; July 8, 1955, Folder 9, Box 1, FCP.

community fabric not be weakened.”⁶²⁵ The general tendency of Community Research Associates studies (with which the FCP was usually lumped) was to suggest a consolidation of voluntary resources, which was opposed by many influential national voluntary associations, who resented the “standard pattern of recommending mergers” between agencies.⁶²⁶

More and more, the FCP project shifted to focus on public agencies. The executives of the three primary voluntary agencies involved in the study wrote a letter in 1960 saying that they were interested in continuing to focus on the development of casework technique but perceived that the momentum of the project had swung toward managing public welfare caseloads.⁶²⁷ As the project drew to the end of its funding in the late 1950s, its directors found a chance for extension through implementing its classification and reporting procedures in the Ramsey County Welfare Department—what in essence became a triage strategy of determining which families would be most amenable to improvement through intensive casework. Gradually, the FCP project dwindled to a sorting technique for administrators in the Department.⁶²⁸ Moreover, many of the specifics of the St. Paul Study and Family Centered Project began to be tarnished in the early 1960s as critics attacked the concepts underlying the “family

⁶²⁵ FCP Discussion Group Minutes, Jan. 7, 1955, Folder 8; Workshop Minutes, Apr. 25, 1958, Folder 10, Box 1, FCP.

⁶²⁶ Lukoff and Mencher; on national agency opposition, see Merrill Krugoff to Donald Morgan, Feb. 25, 1960, Folder 243, Box 24, FCP.

⁶²⁷ Dawson Bradshaw, Fr. Francis Curtin, Leonard Schneiderman, to Charles Birt, May 18, 1960, folder 20 Box 2, FCP.

⁶²⁸ Rutman, p. 122, 132. The shift to what the FCP called “case load management”, classifying families by degree of treatability, demonstrated one of the tensions in how case work was promoted during the 1950s and early 1960s – the triage system focused on the most treatable, whereas the focus of the earlier FCP had been on the least treatable, most difficult cases. A similar tension was evident in the promotion of both “prevention” and “rehabilitation” by caseworkers, the former focusing on families on their way into trouble, the latter on those already enmeshed with social agencies.

centered” approach. Buell himself recognized that his formulas for a family-focused pattern of social service organization had been implemented in only a few places. However, he noted, “On the other hand, pieces of them have attained quite general currency,” notably the idea of the multi-problem family.⁶²⁹

Part of the reason for this was the ascendance of the “culture of poverty” concept. Based on seemingly more concrete social scientific investigation, academics outside of social work embraced it in preference to the home-grown, social work concept of the multiproblem family and its emphasis on family dynamics. While the term “multiproblem family” persisted in use throughout the 1960s, it receded to a more descriptive term bolstered by the explanatory power of the culture of poverty. Oscar Lewis himself alluded to the work being done in the U.S. with “multiple-problem families” as an attempt to wrestle with the domestic variant of the culture of poverty.⁶³⁰ Early proponents of the culture of poverty embraced the idea as enthusiastically and optimistically as social workers had the multiproblem family in the 1950s. For instance, volunteers for the North Carolina Fund, a statewide anti-poverty program in the early 1960s, were told that the deprived people they were to work with lived in a “culture of poverty” that could “twist and deform’ the human spirit.” They were then told that their role was to “provide the atmosphere” that could foster change in those families.⁶³¹ In its early iteration, liberal use of the culture of poverty shared the same optimism about the possibilities of breaking the

⁶²⁹ The “family centered” analysis was encapsulated in Alice Voiland, et al., *Family Casework Diagnosis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962). Voiland and Buell later married. The book was harshly reviewed in Henry Maas, “*Family Casework Diagnosis: An Essay Review*,” *Social Service Review* (Dec. 1962): 444-450. Buell to Birt, Dec. 13, 1960, Folder 243, Box 24, FCP. Well into the 1960s, “multi-problem” co-existed with the “culture of poverty,” as social work students continued to cite the St. Paul study and publications of the FCP.

⁶³⁰ Lewis, “Culture of Poverty,” p. 198.

⁶³¹ Robert Korstadt and James Lelouidis, “Citizen Soldiers: The North Carolina Volunteers and the War on Poverty,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* (Autumn 1999): [Infotrac Online citation, p. 5].

culture of poverty, as the Family Centered Project had hoped to adjust relationships.

It was not until the late 1960s that the conservative, pessimistic, and deterministic uses of the culture of poverty reduced its appeal among social practitioners.⁶³²

Conclusion

Despite a lack of concrete institutional legacies, the St. Paul projects had resurrected and burnished the notion of a behaviorally deviant lower class and made them amenable to reform in the eyes of influential policy makers at the local and national levels. On one level, then, tracing the story of the multi-problem family adds to our genealogy of the concepts that fed into the embrace of the culture of poverty and the underclass in the latter part of the twentieth century. The St. Paul Study and Family Centered Project helped revive long-held notions about the nature of persistent, extensive, multi-generational patterns of families with problems. It gave some statistical, quasi-scientific credibility to these observations, and helped divorce them from their eugenic overtones. But its specific genesis in studies of social service use, and its popularity among social workers, point to the need to examine how the mundane experiences of social welfare institutions and personnel also helped shape contemporary thought about poverty.

It is also a cautionary example of how distorted the effect of demonstration projects can be. St. Paul exemplified the hope that a limited, focused application of existing social service structures, personnel, and technique, focused on a small population

⁶³² O'Connor, p. 66. Charles Palmer, a Chicago MSW who worked in a variety of voluntary then state social service organizations in the Midwest, recalled using the "culture of poverty" to teach to his social work students in the mid-1960s, but ultimately abandoned it due to its "overly deterministic and somewhat pessimistic" implications. Personal communication, Charles Palmer to author, Aug. 1, 2002.

who seemed to embody the core of the city's social problems, might cure the problem as if a magic bullet. For the social workers, the intense experience of participating in a cutting-edge project, the constant reinforcement and reassurance from project leaders, and the sense that they were pushing themselves professionally helped convince them of its value, and made them apostles for the cause. For clients, there may have even been a Hawthorne-like effect, where being selected for study, even in as stigmatized a group as this, may have helped create "positive movement" where in normal application, there may have been none. But most important was how readily the concept was embraced and pointed to as an example by promoters of a public policy that encouraged this sort of intensive, service-based engagement with families. The 1962 Public Welfare Amendments, which the St. Paul project helped pave the way for, was criticized for basing its arguments on overly optimistic, and conceptually flawed, demonstration projects—as some argued St. Paul had been.⁶³³ St. Paul demonstrated that, while casework might help on the margins, it would take a further, deeper, systematic reform to impact the lives of the families it engaged.

Finally, the St. Paul project reminds historians of social welfare that the roots of welfare policy in the mid-twentieth century extend outside of federal bureaucracies. While the 1950s in particular has been portrayed as an era of policy-making characterized by incremental advances from within the public welfare system, St. Paul reminds us to keep the voluntary sector in our scholarly sights.⁶³⁴ Figures like Buell whose world view was decisively shaped by the needs and history of local agency networks, and social workers

⁶³³ Polsky, p. 160. Similar flaws characterized the promotion of "faith-based" social services in the 1990s, but these tended to be as under-reported as those of the early 1960s. See Jacob Hacker, "Faith Healers: Should Churches Take Over Social Policy?" *The New Republic* (June 28, 1999): 16.

⁶³⁴ Martha Derthick, *Policymaking for Social Security* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1979).

whose professional practice turned on their experiences in private family agencies, remained deeply influential, particularly in the 1950s. It is also worth noting that the experience of voluntary agencies within this project was also mixed; those outside the project doubted its applicability, and when the project shifted decisively toward planning for public welfare practice, they withdrew from the arrangement. Thus the relationship of the voluntary sector to the “therapeutic state” is complex and sometimes contradictory. Overall, though, the voluntary agencies in St. Paul were in the vanguard of private agency practice. The next chapter will explore the more quotidian travails of a very average family agency in the 1950s as it attempted to embrace service as its primary function.

CHAPTER SIX: THE LIMITS OF VOLUNTARISM

Introduction

Ethelda Mullen's retirement from the Family Society of Wilmington in early 1951 was literally the end of an era. Mullen, a Wilmington native, had begun as a volunteer at the agency when it was named the Associated Charities in 1917, and was hired as its executive secretary a year and a half later. In the small state of Delaware, Mullen had cast a long shadow. She had played a key role in building the emergency public relief apparatus during the Depression in the 1930s, and had worked hard to build a professional base for public social work in the new state welfare agencies. During her career in Delaware, Mullen had started the Delaware chapter of the American Association of Social Workers, served several terms as president of the Delaware State Council on Social Work, and helped found the Welfare Council of Delaware. As the *Wilmington Journal Every Evening* noted, "She is informally known as the 'dean' of the local social welfare field." Her retirement ended the civic prominence of the Family Society of Wilmington and its near-identity with its Progressive-era executive.⁶³⁵

Mullen's retirement coincided with the departure of two other social workers from the agency, including Else Jockel, who for 13 years had helped raise the professional standards of the agency. Sixty-eight years of experience left with these three women.

To take Mullen's place as Executive Secretary of the agency, Ann Bender was elevated from executive assistant. Bender had been at the agency since the mid-1940s, working there to complete her fieldwork for her masters of social work from the

⁶³⁵ "Miss Mullen to End Family Society Service," *Journal Every Evening*, Jan. 10, 1951, p. 1.

University of Pennsylvania. Bender's professional history sharply contrasted that of Mullen. She was from Omaha, Nebraska, and had entered social work as an untrained caseworker during the Depression in the Traveler's Aid division of Family Service of Omaha. She moved into public social work as a county supervisor in the Iowa State Department of Public Assistance, and then back into the voluntary sector in the Social Service League of Waterloo, Iowa. She then moved to Wilmington with her husband, a doctor who obtained a position in the employee relations department of the Du Pont Company.⁶³⁶ Her resume was not atypical — turnover among social workers was generally high. Many female workers shifted jobs to track the careers of their husbands, or, if unmarried, to move up the professional ladder; male workers moved in search of higher salaries to support families. Her relative newness to Wilmington, and her promotion to the post through professional, rather than volunteer service, was emblematic of the differences between her and Mullen's generation of social workers. Such a generational shift of agency leadership, combined with rapid professional turnover, was a common pattern in family service agencies in the late 1940s and early 1950s—in Cleveland, in 1950 and 1951, the agency lost four of its supervisory staff, all women, three to better positions at other agencies, and one to marriage, and Helen Hanchette retired in 1952 after 19 years as the General Secretary of Family Service of Cleveland and 41 years with the agency.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁶ Lynette Ann Bender, "Helping an Applicant for Emergency Financial Assistance to Use the Specific Service of a Family Agency" (MSW, Pennsylvania School of Social Work, 1948); *Wilmington Evening Journal*, July 17, 1963.

⁶³⁷ Ludwig Graner, "Are Social Workers Migrants?" *The Compass*, Sept. 1947 p. 17-20; Florence Waite, *A Warm Friend for the Spirit: A History of the Family Service Association of Cleveland and its Forebears, 1830-1952* (Cleveland: Family Service Association of Cleveland, 1960), p. 401-402.

The new leadership at the Family Society also signaled a transition for the agency. On paper, the Family Society would come to conform to the outward image of professional, voluntary social service in the 1950s. It would change its name to Family Service of Northern Delaware; it would shed the last vestiges of older charitable commitments; it would tie itself into an expanding therapeutic establishment in the state; and it would establish a division of labor between its work and the responsibilities of the slowly expanding public welfare administration of the state. The Family Society would try to build on the work of the national Family Service Association in publicizing family service counseling as a resource to address people's worries about their marriage or their child rearing practices. Such efforts to promote counseling provided the grist for later critics, such as Christopher Lasch, to accuse social workers of manufacturing markets for their unnecessary services.⁶³⁸ This chapter will show that while family agencies did in fact earnestly promote their counseling services and believed deeply in their efficacy, they were also urged to do so by outside forces—particularly voluntary sector fundraising and planning organizations that sensed a need for expanded counseling resources to address family problems in the postwar era. In a time where services of all sorts proliferated, the logic of providing services in the voluntary sector seemed attractive.

It was changes like this that would lead critics and historians of social work in general, and voluntary agencies in particular, to charge voluntary agencies with abandoning a commitment to the poor in order to pursue middle class clients and their emotional problems. The charge was correct in point of fact; by the late 1950s, many

⁶³⁸ Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 109, and quoted in Daniel Walkowitz, *Working With Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. xii.

family agencies were strenuously trying to avoid dealing with the most troubled and needy clients in their communities. Pointing to professionalism to explain this process is only a limited answer. It is a subset of a larger critique of social work that came to a peak in the 1960s, that stressed in particular the obsession of social workers with their professional status, and their turn to therapy as a means to bolster their status—while at the same time abandoning an older tradition of advocacy for the poor.⁶³⁹ While it is difficult to overstate the concern over professionalism within social work, such critiques have obscured other pressures, largely institutional, that led voluntary agencies to move away from servicing the poor. Organizational issues within voluntary agencies, such as staffing, funding, and establishing legitimacy for their services, made it unlikely that they would emerge as advocates for the poor. The limits of voluntarism, as much as the limits of social work, help explain this process.

Moreover, the focus on professionalism tends to ignore the framework of the division of labor that since the New Deal had given primacy to public institutions and that was embraced by many liberals. Voluntary agencies saw the major responsibility for dealing with poverty to rest with the state, and their primary political stance was a reaffirmation of that role. Research in agency records reflects a continuing preoccupation with the poor in the 1950s in family service agencies—or more specifically, with the welfare system that was serving them inadequately. In agencies such as Family Service of Northern Delaware (the new name for the Family Society as of 1956), in a state whose

⁶³⁹ Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career* (New York: Atheneum, 1973). Lubove's work was the seminal study of social work professionalism in the 1920s. Originally published in 1965, Lubove's book not only reflected an emerging interest in the social sciences in the process of professionalization, but the author's own dissatisfaction with the direction of social work in the 1960s. See Roy Lubove, "Social Work and the Life of the Poor," *The Nation* (May 23, 1966): 609-611.

political leadership had demonstrated only a minimal commitment to its social welfare policies, the lines between voluntary service and public welfare were continually blurred. Equal parts of concern for the poor and for their own organizational vitality often led private agencies to continue to advocate higher public welfare expenditures, a tendency usually overlooked by most social work historians. But it was equally true that the “new alignments” of the New Deal, when paired with an inadequate public assistance safety net, led as often to clients being abandoned by both private and public agencies. Critics within the family service movement anticipated the critiques of the 1960s by urging family agencies to bear more forceful witness about the needs of the poor.

Family Society to Family Service

The public face of the Family Society of Wilmington changed dramatically during the 1950s. Ethelda Mullen’s departure was the most obvious. Ann Bender made it a priority to move the agency away from the vestiges of its charitable past in order to make the Society’s focus on its counseling services more clear. Many family agencies in other parts of the country had begun this process in the previous twenty years, but because of Mullen’s length of service, the slow turnover of the Board of Directors, a strong tradition of private philanthropy in the state, and the tenuous commitment of the state legislature to funding public welfare, charity lingered longer in Delaware. Slowly, however, Bender worked to disengage the agency from older commitments. First to go was the agency’s connection with the *Wilmington News and Journal* papers’ “25 Most Needy Campaign” held each Christmas. Since 1924, the Society had written up cases from their records and given them to the local paper, which in turn used them to raise money for the families. As

the Society shifted the bulk of financial assistance to public welfare during the 1930s and 1940s, its case records turned up fewer and fewer clear-cut cases of need. In December 1951, the Society's social workers complained that the editors of the *News and Journal* had rewritten the cases they supplied. The publisher explained that the cases lacked the "emotional appeal necessary for fundraising." Bender suggested a reconsideration of the relationship. The issue surfaced again next year, when Bender told the Board the staff was having a difficult time finding suitable cases from their rolls, since the Department of Public Assistance was now helping the most likely candidates for the appeal. She concluded that the papers were not interested in the "service type of case" that the Society focused on, and that continued participation in the campaign pegged the Society as a welfare rather than social service agency. The Board agreed, and the collaboration ended in 1953. That year, the agency also withdrew from running the Christmas Basket program for the Mayor's Christmas committee. Bender told the Board that the program distracted the staff from their primary responsibilities, and that it harkened back to an era of giving "relief in kind" (groceries, fuel, etcetera), far distant from contemporary social work practice.⁶⁴⁰

Next to go was Camp Wright, the summer camp that the agency had been running since 1916. Bender explained to a field representative of the Family Service Association that she found the camp burdensome and time-consuming, and outside of the purview of an agency focused on individual counseling. She explained that the camp had "always [been] carried" by the agency and was a "pet" of the board — several deceased board members had endowed support for the camp, and minutes of the Board of Directors

⁶⁴⁰ Board of Directors Minutes, Family Society of Wilmington, Dec. 18, 1951; Nov. 18, 1952; Feb. 17, 1953; Nov. 17, 1953, Children and Families First Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

reflected more interest in the facilities of the summer camp than the day-to-day work of the agency. Perhaps more importantly, there were also signs that the camp might become a political liability — in 1952 a group at St. Matthews Episcopal Church asked pointed questions about the whites-only policy at the camp. Delaware's official policy of school segregation was under attack in the late 1940s, and segregation in other areas of public life was being quietly rolled back. Alexander Nichols, president of the Society, used the question of integration to ask whether the agency should be running a camp at all. Bender was eventually able to coax the Board to experiment in 1954 with allowing the West End Neighborhood House, a Wilmington settlement house, to run the camp, on the grounds that they would use the facilities for a longer period of time, and it would be less of an expense to the agency.⁶⁴¹

These terminations of older charitable commitments coincided with a decision to hold closed annual meetings, starting in 1952. In earlier decades annual meetings had been open to interested members of the community, and were ritually reported on by the local newspapers. As the agency's mission became less focused on traditional charity, and as the use of professionals increased, the agency's staff saw less and less value in an open meeting. Following the departure of Mullen, the Board decided that there was "little of general interest" to report to the community, and opted for a smaller closed meeting.⁶⁴² Taken with the change of the agency's name from the Family Society of Wilmington (its

⁶⁴¹"Report of FSAA Contact," Oct. 12, 1954, File 44, Box 40, FSAA Supplement 1; Directors, FSW, Apr. 15, 1952; Nov. 16, 1954; John Munroe, *A History of Delaware*, 4th ed. (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2001), p. 225-228. The agency also asked the Welfare Council of Delaware in 1956 to take over responsibility for the Social Service Exchange, the clearinghouse for information on applicants to social welfare agencies that many communities had run since the 1890s (Delaware's started in 1916) but that fell into disuse in the post-World War Two period. Directors, FSND, May 15, 1956.

⁶⁴² Directors, FSW, Jan. 15, 1952, Jan. 19, 1954.

title since 1931) to Family Service of Northern Delaware in 1956, the agency embraced the professional shape of postwar family service, and turned its back on its public identity as a community, charitable institution.

The Family Society also reached out to connect itself to the nascent therapeutic network in Wilmington. Difficulty handling several “seriously disturbed” clients in the summer of 1951 led the staff of Family Service to request guidance from the psychiatrist at the mental hygiene clinic, arranged by Family Society board member Dr. M.A. Tarumianz, the head of the state’s mental hospital. The Society in turn helped supply counseling to other agencies. The Jewish Federation of Delaware asked to meet with the Family Society in 1953 so that Jewish agencies could better make use of the counseling resources of the Society. Several other local agencies also requested counseling aid from the Society, though Bender reported that they were too short-staffed to provide any further outreach to other agencies. With the creation of a Child Guidance Clinic in 1953, the therapeutic resources of the community deepened, and in 1954, the Family Society contracted with Dr. William Sisson of the Clinic to run staff workshops at the agency and to serve as their psychiatric consultant for difficult cases.⁶⁴³

By accounts of service statistics, the Society was successful. By the end of the decade, it was serving almost 70 percent more clients than it had when it had begun. The downward slide of clients that had frightened agencies during the 1940s had not continued. By the count of the staff, more and more clients were coming to the agency specifically to work on issues of family relationships or marital counseling, at least 31 percent in 1955. John Kotis, a social worker hired in the 1950s to focus on marriage

⁶⁴³ Directors, FSW, Oct. 16, 1951; Apr. 20, 1954; Mar. 1955; Executive Secretary’s Report, FSW, Sept. 1953; “Report of FSAA Contact,” Oct. 12, 1954; *Journal Every Evening*, Sept. 8, 1953, p. 35.

counseling, attributed it to being “in the ‘marriage counseling era’ as much as we are in the ‘psychological era’.” Bender pointed to a concerted effort at public relations on the national level, by the FSAA, and by local efforts to define the function of the agency more precisely. In January 1953, she brought a copy of *Cosmopolitan* magazine to her board meeting, pointing out the article, “Are Marriage Counselors Any Good?” as an example of how the FSAA was helping promote family agencies as counseling resources. The article promised no magic bullets for couples with problems, but portrayed the marriage counselors as “a kind of big canvas on which you paint a picture of your situation; then you can stand back and take a good look.” It went on to warn potential clients to “beware of meaningless titles” and to seek out professional advice, noting that over sixty percent of “reliable” marriage counseling took place in family agencies. The Family Society, it seemed, was well positioned to take advantage of a need that were apparently of “considerable interest to the community” through the decade.⁶⁴⁴

A growing network of lay and professional activists in Delaware, working out of voluntary sector and quasi-public institutions, also promoted counseling as a social welfare resource during the 1950s. The case of marriage counseling is a particularly good example. In 1950, the Delaware report to the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth identified marriage counseling as one of the gaps in the social services of Delaware; the Delaware Commission on Children and Youth, took up the issue in that year. The Commission was created by the legislature in 1951 in response to “urgings” from activists on child welfare and juvenile delinquency issues. It was

⁶⁴⁴ John Kotis, “Learning to Use Myself More Skillfully in the Ending Phase of the Helping Process in Marital Counseling,” (unpublished seminar paper, University of Pennsylvania, 1957), CFF Library; Michael Drury, “Are Marriage Counselors Any Good?” *Cosmopolitan* (Jan. 1953), p. 104-107; Directors, FSW, Jan. 27, 1953; Mar. 19, 1960.

primarily an advisory board, but it was packed with representatives from voluntary organizations who had some influence in the state government. It was committed to the increasing use of a variety of therapeutic services in both voluntary and public institutions. After issuing a report indicating that the problems of children could be eased by better marital relations between their parents, the Commission passed the responsibility on to the Welfare Council of Delaware to determine how best to build up such a service. The Council was a planning group made up of lay activists and social agency representatives and tied to the local voluntary fundraising organizations. Its participation in promoting marriage counseling demonstrated the rapid penetration of the belief in the efficacy of such techniques throughout a matrix of influential lay and professional social welfare institutions in the state—a pattern repeated across the country.⁶⁴⁵

As in Baltimore and numerous other cities and states had done in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Welfare Council of Delaware tallied 505 divorces in the state in 1952 and took this as a sign of a need for counseling. They found a number of places where individual counseling was being conducted, among them, the Family Court, the Mental Hygiene Clinic, the Catholic Welfare Guild, and the Jewish Welfare Society, but singled out the Family Society as surpassing all of those agencies as a general counseling resource. However, they noted, there was a “general unawareness that it is available” due

⁶⁴⁵ For an examination of how such efforts were promoted in Chicago by a network of voluntary fundraising and planning organizations in the 1950s, see Ken Cmiel, *A Home of Another Kind: One Chicago Orphanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 130-132.

to the fact that the Society was still perceived as a financial relief agency.⁶⁴⁶ While the Commission on Children and Youth envisioned creating an entirely new facility for marriage counseling, the Welfare Council recommended that the Family Society open a separate office for marriage counseling, in order to physically distinguish it from its welfare functions.

The tension between welfare and service, as earlier chapters have shown, dogged many family service agencies for decades. In Delaware, it was heightened by the weakness and underfunding of the state's public welfare system. Per capita spending on public assistance was two-thirds of the national average in 1951. In 1954, of the 21 states that had legal ceilings on Old Age Assistance, only Mississippi was lower than Delaware. Commissioner of Social Security Charles Schottland pointed out in a speech in 1954 to the Delaware Citizens' Council on Social Work that the state had the lowest assistance grants of any of the industrial states.⁶⁴⁷ Delaware, like many border and southern states, had a limited state role in social welfare prior to the New Deal, and relied on county administration of financial assistance as well as the philanthropic contributions of its leading citizens, particularly the Du Pont family. Both traditions worked against the centralization of welfare functions in the state—Delaware did not have a unified State Department of Public Welfare until 1951. But despite administrative reform in the early 1950s, funding of the state's share of public assistance continued to be inadequate, due, according to a contemporary observer, to the resistance of "some elements of the State"

⁶⁴⁶ Welfare Council of Delaware, "Report of the Committee on Marriage Counseling Service," May 1953, Folder 11, Box 26, Pearl Herlihy Daniels Collection, Historical Society of Delaware (HSD).

⁶⁴⁷ Paul Dolan, *The Government and Administration of Delaware* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1956), p. 230; notes on speeches by Edgar Hare Jr. (Director, Delaware Dept. of Public Welfare) and Charles Schottland to Citizen's Conference on Social Work, Nov. 17, 1954, Folder 28, Box 1, Wilmot R. Jones Collection, HSD.

to the “demand on part of urban groups for increased help in the field of public assistance.”⁶⁴⁸ The rapidly changing demographics of Wilmington in particular undoubtedly played into the reluctance to fund programs perceived as “urban”: a steadily increase in African-American population in the city, driven by rural migrants from Delaware and Maryland’s eastern shore, intensified between 1950 and 1960, and was made even more obvious by the overall decline in the city’s population, as white residents moved to suburban New Castle County. Wilmington’s black population shot up from 15.6 percent in 1950 to 26.2 percent in 1960.⁶⁴⁹

As had been evident in the late 1940s, the Family Society’s fortunes were linked to the strength of the public assistance system, and both were increasingly tied to Wilmington’s racial composition. With weak welfare, financial assistance continued to preoccupy many of the clients who came to the Society for aid. Of 37 applicants in November 1949, 18 needed financial assistance, and 154 out of 472 families seen that year needed financial help. One third of the total caseload was black, though what percentage of those asked for financial assistance was not recorded. Bender noted optimistically that overall, the numbers of relief applicants seemed to be dropping in 1952 but the impression remained that, in Society President Alexander Nichols’ words, “we are a relief agency.” Voluntary money was still dwarfed by public. The Society had granted \$10,458 to 118 families during 1952. In comparison, the State Department of Public Welfare spent an average of \$63,713 a month in 1952 on Aid to Dependent Children alone. But cutbacks at the state level did little to offer the Society a way to

⁶⁴⁸ Dolan, p. 221.

⁶⁴⁹ Munroe, p. 224; Carol Hoffecker, *Corporate Capital: Wilmington in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), p. 160.

reduce their relief role any further. State budget reductions in early 1953 slashed the Department of Welfare's workforce, and led it to informally advise private agencies that it would not take any cases that private agencies could cover. Indeed, the Society conferred with officials of the State Welfare Department's Division of Assistance in early 1953 to discuss who would take responsibility for emergency assistance, with the Society reluctantly agreeing to take on a limited number of cases that needed financial aid. Requests for assistance continued to mount, particularly in the winter.⁶⁵⁰

State prohibitions on assistance to non-residents (one year for Aid to Dependent Children, two years for general assistance) also opened family agencies to requests for aid. "Who is responsible for the non-resident who is unwilling or unable to return to his home state?" asked the Society's board. The Department of Public Welfare was not, and the Society feared that such cases would fall back onto them. Such gaping holes in the public safety net led voluntary agencies to press for better public coverage. In a meeting convened by the Welfare Council of Delaware, Mrs. James Williams pointed out that the "adequacy and standards, or lack of them, of the program of public agencies are bound to affect the services of private agencies," and urged voluntary groups to familiarize themselves with proposals to improve welfare standards. Welfare officials at the same meeting urged voluntary agencies to write about the problem, and in January 1955, the Family Society's Board, seeing its relief costs double that month compared to a year before, wrote to the Welfare Department saying that they were under pressure not only to meet the needs of non-residents, but to supplement the inadequate grants of the DPW.

⁶⁵⁰ Directors, FSW, Jan. 17, 1950; Oct. 21, 1952; Dec. 15, 1953; Minutes, Division of Family and Children's Services, Welfare Council of Delaware, Mar. 25, 1953, Folder 1, Box D-26, Daniels Papers; Dolan, p. 230.

They asked them to lower their requirements to a year residency for general assistance, and to exclude medical and nursing expenses from the ceilings on grants. The Department urged the voluntary agencies to take their case to the legislature.⁶⁵¹ The scene was re-enacted in 1957. Family Society board members tried to ascertain, through contacts in the DPW, “the fundamental reasons for the legislatures’ lack of general interest in the [DPW].” The Welfare Council pushed agencies to support a proposal forwarded by the DPW that would raise staff salaries and increase ADC grant ceilings from the paltry 55 percent of the recommended budget that grants covered in 1957. Mrs. Frank B. Dougherty called a meeting of the eight voluntary agencies who “routinely are asked to fill these needs” to lobby for the changes. But again, their efforts were to no avail. In 1959, the Welfare Council noted that cutbacks on ADC grants were being felt throughout the voluntary agencies sponsored by the local United Fund.⁶⁵²

Clearly, voluntary agencies in Delaware were intimately tied to the public assistance structures, both by virtue of overlap of some of their clientele, and by their role as a court of last resort for those underserved by public structures. Occasionally, the deliberate neglect of public assistance by the state legislature occasioned action by voluntary agencies. The Welfare Council attempted to tutor agency board members in how to best intervene in public policy making. It was not enough, said Elizabeth Townsend of the Welfare Council, for voluntary agencies to simply take action in support of or against a particular piece of legislation (though this was a challenge in itself for

⁶⁵¹ Directors, FSW, Sept. 21, 1954; Dec. 21, 1954; Jan. 18, 1955; Feb. 15, 1955; Minutes, Division of Family and Children’s Services, Welfare Council of DE, Nov. 23, 1954.

⁶⁵² Minutes, Division of Family and Children’s Services, Welfare Council of DE, Mar. 7, 1957, Folder 1, Box D-26; Minutes, BoD, Welfare Council of DE, Jan. 14, 1957; Sept. 9, 1957; Apr. 13, 1959; Oct. 10, 1959, Folder 5, Box 25, Daniels Papers; Directors, FSW, Jan. 15, 1957.

many agencies); they needed to be involved earlier in the legislative process, to know the details of committees and of sponsors. Moreover, it was much more effective for a board member to make the agency's case than a professional employee, presumably a social worker. Left unstated, but understood, was that the presumed disinterestedness of a board member, and perhaps their conservatism, would provide a more reassuring testament of the needs of clients than a social worker's possibly self-interested, and almost certainly softhearted, plea for better services.⁶⁵³ Family Service's occasional forays into the legislative process had the support of Alexander Nichols, a prominent corporate lawyer, board member, and president of the agency in the mid-1950s. But Bender complained regularly to the FSAA that her Board in general was aloof from most of the day-to-day work of the agency that might bring greater social awareness. The Board came to meetings regularly, and through their influence on the United Fund guaranteed that the agency got its appropriations, but were not interested in the kind of committee work that a sustained engagement with public issues would require. Little indication remains in board minutes of the agency over the nature of discussions regarding agency positions on legislative issues, but the bankers and Du Pont family members and employees on the board certainly suggest a presumption of caution, if not conservatism.⁶⁵⁴

Given the travails of the state's welfare system, and economic and racial changes in Wilmington, it was a continual struggle for the Family Society to embrace its role as a

⁶⁵³ Division of Family and Children's Services, WCD, Minutes, Apr. 29, 1958, Folder 1, Box D-26, Daniels Papers.

⁶⁵⁴ Bender described her board in 1954 as self-perpetuating, and made up of "wealthy and influential people in Wilmington." "Report of FSAA Contact," Oct. 12, 1954; "Report of FSAA Contact," June 1956, File 44, Box 40, FSAA Supp. 1.

counseling service. In the heart of downtown Wilmington, near deteriorating neighborhoods slated for urban renewal, 41 percent of their clients in 1955 reported economic problems. In December of 1957, 25 of the 55 active cases were having trouble getting assistance from the DPW, and only eight of those were interested in other services the agency had to offer. The racial cast of their clientele seemed to map quite closely the demographics of Wilmington; of 70 cases seen in October 1958, a typical month by the staff's account, 52 were white and 18 cases, or 25.7 percent, were black, while Wilmington's population in 1960 was 26.2 percent black.⁶⁵⁵ As a student who trained at FSND wrote later, "counseling was often overshadowed by the monetary aid" offered by the agency, "... probably because of the nature of the community"—most likely, the community's conservative welfare politics.⁶⁵⁶

At the same time, Family Service caseworkers found themselves perplexed by new social problems emerging in Wilmington's black population. The Welfare Council noted the rise of unwed motherhood in Wilmington in the early 1950s, and traced it specifically to African Americans; the rate among whites had dropped since 1943, but had increased by 30 percent among blacks. The Council found that there was "frequently no social or moral stigma" attached to illegitimacy. To confront the issue, the Council urged better educational programs in schools and youth programs, provision of maternity home services for nonwhites, and counseling services for young mothers. But the Family Society found that few unmarried mothers made it to their doors, and caseworkers found it hard to get those that did to consider "their total personal problem." Nonetheless, the

⁶⁵⁵ Directors, FSND, Nov. 18, 1958.

⁶⁵⁶ Directors, FSW, Jan. 17, 1956; Jan. 18, 1957; Sally Bennett, "Learning to Accept the Value of Using My Own Feelings in a Casework Relationship," (MSW, University of Pennsylvania, 1966), p. 21.

Welfare Council pressured the Family Society and the Children's Bureau (the local voluntary adoption agency) to work closer on services to unmarried mothers, and Family Service began seeing more and more. The caseworkers found it difficult to induce changes in behavior or living situations that would cut down on the likelihood that the women would have another child.⁶⁵⁷ Their frustration was shared by family service agencies nationally. A committee considering research options for the FSAA proposed a study on how to interrupt patterns of illegitimate pregnancies for mothers on ADC, but decided not to act on it. Agencies tended to see one type of unwed mother, said the committee, whose "neurotic repetition" might be addressed by casework. But the other pattern, "a culturally determined repetition" did not seem to be within the purview of private agencies, and should be the responsibility of public welfare.⁶⁵⁸ As other historians have shown, these distinctions had clear racial and class implications—neuroses meant white middle class girls, while culture meant poor girls, usually black.⁶⁵⁹ Backing away from the "cultural" problems of African Americans meant slanting their services to middle class clients who seemed more receptive to counseling. Such a stance highlights why the St. Paul Family Centered Project, described in the previous chapter, was seen as so innovative—it reached out to such people and, at least initially, was optimistic that casework could indeed help break these patterns.

Serving new clients meant cutting off old clients. In response to signals from the Welfare Council, Family Service took several positive steps to publicize its counseling resources and psychiatric consultation, including new publicity material and visits to

⁶⁵⁷ Directors, FSW, Mar. 15, 1955; Dec. 20, 1955; Oct. 15, 1957.

⁶⁵⁸ Research Committee Minutes, June 11, 1957, Folder 29, Box 22, FSAA.

⁶⁵⁹ Regina Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 145-155.

civic and professional groups. However, in 1958, it also decided it needed to put a brake on its financial assistance programs. An increase in demands for financial aid of 17 percent during 1957, coming largely from walk-ins who had no prior connection to the agency, seemed to threaten the basic program of Family Service. If they became deeply involved in financial assistance, said Bender, it would be at the expense of serving the “families in the community that have the motivation and initiative to work constructively toward a solution to their problem.” Family Service, she argued, should support the public agency in meeting basic needs, but focus their efforts on prevention and rehabilitation. If forced to choose between serving two groups of families, she concluded, “we must decide in favor of the families with motivation for change, even though the other’s basic economic needs are greater.”⁶⁶⁰ The agency started turning away clients who asked for help due to administrative problems at the DPW, but it was ultimately as empty a threat as it had been in the late 1940s; the cutbacks in 1959 forced Family Service to again start meeting emergency needs, and Bender estimated that about 20 percent of staff time was occupied with DPW referrals.⁶⁶¹

Constraints of Professional Service

It is not too difficult to imagine the constraints Bender faced. Keeping the agency staffed was one of them. The agency was meeting the needs of clients with a staff that had not grown from the early 1950s, and that, in fact, had been short of trained staff for most of the decade. Bender had an extremely difficult time filling one of the two positions vacated in 1951, and the position stayed empty for several years. She described

⁶⁶⁰ Directors, FSND, Mar. 18, 1958.

⁶⁶¹ Directors, FSND, Apr. 15, 1958; May 29, 1958; Oct. 29, 1959; Jan. 19, 1960.

the personnel situation as “rather rough” to an FSAA representative in 1951, and near desperate the next year, noting a “very serious personnel shortage that may affect the basic program of the agency.” The Society had opened a branch office in the growing community of Newark, Delaware, but was forced to close it in 1960 due to staff shortages. As social services expanded under the auspices of institutions such as the Veteran’s Administration, competition among agencies for trained social workers intensified. The VA in Delaware was paying wages far above the Family Society, according to Bender, and was drawing off recent graduates from social work schools.⁶⁶²

The dynamics of professionalism within social work have been, and continue to be, a central concern to scholars interested in increasing social work’s inclination to speak on behalf of the poor. By aiming at clients who were attuned to counseling, they have accused professional caseworkers of “professional hedonism,” that is, tailoring their clientele to achieve maximum professional satisfaction.⁶⁶³ For workers in the voluntary sector in the 1950s, there were other factors pushing them to focus on therapy and the non-poor. The pressures to specialize were reflected in family service agencies across the country, and refracted through their national leadership. One reason was increased demand for scarce professional resources. Intake fluctuated in FSAA member agencies in the years after the war but by the 1950s was growing steadily by several percentage points. Waiting lists were growing as well, as agencies still faced a 10 percent vacancy rate for their professional positions.⁶⁶⁴ The number of agencies grew modestly but steadily. Robert Nelson, head of the Family Service of the United Charities of Chicago,

⁶⁶² Anne Bender to Cecile Whalen, Jan. 24, 1952; Bender to Anne McCormick, Dec. 4, 1952, File 44, Box 40, FSAA Supp. 1.; Directors, FSW, Jan. 27, 1953.

⁶⁶³ Martin Rein, *Social Policy: Issues of Choice and Change* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 55.

⁶⁶⁴ “Highlights of Recent FSAA Statistics,” Jan. 1959, Folder 12, Box 33, FSAA.

observed in 1958 that expanding suburban populations were seeking out the services of family agencies, that in new communities “almost the first thing of the basic social services that is organized is the family agency.” In the small city of Bennington, Vermont, in 1950, business leaders and the local League of Women Voters successfully pushed for the creation of a family service agency, including a high school essay contest, “Why We in Bennington Need a Family Service Center.”⁶⁶⁵

Demand for professional services was driven also by postwar prosperity. The median family income had risen by 30 percent between 1950 and 1960. Home ownership had increased to 61.9 percent of the population by 1960, from 43.6 in 1940 and 55 percent in 1950. The Gross National Product had increased 27.4 percent from 1950 to 1957. People with more money were spending more money on services. In 1968, one economist looked back on the postwar era and declared that “the Service sector has become the largest, and, in many respects, the most dynamic element in the U.S. economy.” In the post-World War Two period, the United States became the first country where more than half of the employed population was not involved in producing tangible goods. At least a third of that sector was employed in either government or non-profit institutions. Consumers with money to spend were asking for more and more services, from business, government, and the nonprofit sector.⁶⁶⁶

The glow of postwar prosperity made it easier for voluntary agencies to set aside the problems of poverty as well. Thanks to economic growth and government social

⁶⁶⁵ Transcript, FSAA Executives' Conference, May 8-10, 1958, Folder 20, Box 7, FSAA; “Public Relations Slants,” *Highlights* (Apr. 1950): 62.

⁶⁶⁶ James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 312; Victor Fuchs, *The Service Economy* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1968), p. xxiii, 10; Louis Galambos, “Myth and Reality in the Study of America's Consumer Culture,” (unpublished mss, 1998), p. 10-11.

welfare, the number of families living in absolute poverty had been declining steadily since the turn of the century, and according to one set of figures, had dropped from 51 percent of the country in the middle of the Depression to 30 percent in 1950 and 20 percent in 1960.⁶⁶⁷ If the number of poor were declining, as they had during the opening days of World War Two, then there was even less reason for family agencies to remain wedded to their older style of giving. Poverty had not disappeared for family agencies. Those 40 million still living in poverty in the late 1950s often had the characteristics of many of the troubled families who came to Family Service of Northern Delaware's doors: recent migrants to the city, often African American, living in dilapidated housing or recently displaced by slum clearance. But, as the St. Paul Family Centered Project demonstrated, they were often subsumed into a behavioral underclass of which "dependency" (not poverty) was only one element. The degree to which agencies believed their services could help untangle those "multi-problems" varied from place to place. In Wilmington, it was not high.⁶⁶⁸

Private agencies were staking their service on their professionals, and this was the starkest contrast to social work in public agencies. Several local studies in the late 1940s made this clear. In Los Angeles in 1949, 77 percent of social work positions were in public agencies. However, of caseworkers who had a year or more of professional training, 74 percent worked in private agencies. Similarly, in Michigan in the same year,

⁶⁶⁷ James Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1985* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 78-85.

⁶⁶⁸ When "poverty" was rediscovered in the 1960s, the "multiproblem family" label began to be discarded by leading researchers. A 1965 edition of a 1963 bibliography on multi-problem families noted a drop-off during the intervening two years in material dealing with the concept, and connected it to the shift in emphasis to the War on Poverty. In defense of the concept, the author argued that concerns about multi-problem families were "directly related to poverty." Benjamin Schlesinger, *The Multiproblem Family: A Review and Annotated Bibliography*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. ii.

public agencies such as public assistance, court services, and parole offices employed the majority of social workers. But half or more of their workers lacked graduate training, most acutely in public assistance, where 63.4 percent had no graduate social work education. In contrast, 90 percent of family service agency social workers had some graduate education, and 74.6 percent had a year or more—topped only by the staff of mental hygiene clinics, with 84.2 percent.⁶⁶⁹ In 1955, 85 percent of the caseworkers in FSAA member agencies had MSWs, compared to only 16 percent of the 100,000 people classified as social workers in the U.S.⁶⁷⁰ By 1960, FSAA staff constituted only 30 percent of the family service field (a category that excluded public assistance), but 70 percent of the field's trained social workers. This still represented only 2150 people, roughly 10 percent overall of all MSWs and members of the National Association of Social Work.⁶⁷¹

Keeping agencies staffed in the postwar period was a principal challenge and preoccupation of voluntary agencies. Though the personnel crisis of World War Two eased with the elimination of many wartime agencies, by the early 1950s family agencies were again struggling to keep their professional positions filled. Bender's travails at the Family Society of Wilmington were but one example. The Personnel Committee of the FSAA noted four trends in 1955 that were undermining efforts to build staffs: declining enrollment in graduate schools of social work, excessive turnover of personnel,

⁶⁶⁹ Ernest V. Hollis and Alice L. Taylor, *Social Work Education in the United States: The Report of a Study Made for the National Council on Social Work Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951): p. 92-96. In Los Angeles, the study noted, within public agencies there was a "training gradient": federal agencies had the best trained personnel, followed by state agencies, with local agencies have the fewest professional workers.

⁶⁷⁰ "Report of the Subcommittee on Salary Ranges."

⁶⁷¹ "Facts About Manpower in Family Service," Mar. 2, 1964, Folder 38, Box 17, FSAA.

particularly among beginning workers, shortage of male caseworkers, and competition from other groups for the small pool of professional graduates. The number of social workers expanded at a faster rate than the population of the United States from 1950 to 1960, but 10,000 to 12,000 positions went vacant annually for want of qualified personnel.⁶⁷² As in Wilmington, voluntary agencies would often let positions go unfilled rather than hire someone without an MSW. This had the effect of maintaining FSAA members' highly professionalized ethos, but created an incentive to keep services limited. Highly conscious of staff time and investment, clients with deep problems, particularly financial, led Family Service of Northern Delaware to pose choices between the more and less helpable. In considering a case of a "hard core" family, one caseworker told the Board that the staff had been "trying to determine the rewards that result from such an expenditure of time and money."⁶⁷³

Maintaining that pool of professionals was an expensive proposition, and financial constraints were another consistent preoccupation of voluntary agencies in the postwar period. Compared to social work positions in public assistance, voluntary agencies often did pay better. But, as Wilmington's case showed, other agencies outside of public assistance, both public and voluntary, often offered higher salaries. In Saint Paul, in fact, by the mid-1950s, even the County Welfare Board offered higher salaries for some comparable positions at Family Service of St. Paul. In that agency, yearly pleas to the Community Chest to re-examine its policy on salary ranges for member agencies

⁶⁷² Ernest Witte, "Realities of Staffing Social Welfare Programs," *Social Welfare Forum* 1963 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 178-179.

⁶⁷³ Directors, FSND, Jan. 20, 1959.

resulted in only marginal increases.⁶⁷⁴ New agencies applying for membership in the FSAA also had trouble attracting workers, even with high salaries.⁶⁷⁵

One limit on the growth and staffing of voluntary family agencies was slowing growth of funds from federated financing, or Community Chests. In the early 1950s, there was a near universal sense of crisis among voluntary fundraisers across the country. First, there was a sense that voluntary fundraising was not going to expand particularly rapidly. Some leaders in voluntary fundraising attributed part of the problem to increasing government expenditures in health and welfare. "The essential requirement is that the public understand that although they pay taxes and receive public service the need for voluntary services continues," wrote Fred Hoehler of the American Public Welfare Association in 1949. But there were pressing problems within the field of voluntary fundraising that had little to do with any government crowding-out effect. Harry Lurie of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds discerned that givers at the local level felt that voluntary agencies were not doing much that was critical, and that "a considerable part closely resembles boondoggling" by agencies looking simply to stay afloat.⁶⁷⁶

Most pressing was increased competition for voluntary funds from outside the structure of the Community Chest, in particular from national organizations raising money for health research. Though worries about ruinous competition among voluntary

⁶⁷⁴ "Report of the Subcommittee on Salary Ranges," May 2, 1955, Folder 30, Box 18, FSAA; Memo, "Salary Ranges," Apr. 18, 1949, BoD 1949, Box 2, FSSP; Directors, FS St. Paul, Jan. 6, 1956, Box 2, FSSP.

⁶⁷⁵ Executive Committee Minutes, FSAA, Jan. 20, 1956, Folder 17, Box 6.

⁶⁷⁶ Fred Hoehler, "Community Chests," *Social Work Yearbook 1949* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1949), p. 122; Lyman Ford, "Community Chests," *Social Work Yearbook 1951* (New York: American Association of Social Workers, 1951), p. 120; Harry Lurie, "How Much Social Welfare Can We Afford?" *Social Service Review* (Dec. 1950): 474.

agencies during World War Two had stimulated federal intervention to help voluntarism organize itself, in the postwar period the federal hand withdrew. An intense period of competition followed and lasted for most of the 1950s. As one observer noted, in 1951 there “exists a national agency for practically every major disease or handicap,” including the American Cancer Society, National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, National Society for Crippled Children and Adults, and the National Tuberculosis Association. Not only were there more agencies jousting for a piece of a slow-growing voluntary dollar, but most of these national agencies, following the long-standing policy of the American Red Cross, refused to agree to participate in the local, annual Community Chest fund drive. The result was a proliferation of fund drives throughout the year, creating a welter of solicitation, “not unlike that which gave rise to the chest movement in the first place.” An increasing number of chests reported difficulty meeting the goals of their fund drives, due to competition from other voluntary organizations.⁶⁷⁷ *Nation's Business*, the publication of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, reported dissatisfaction with the antagonism between Chests and independent organization, as well as a general sense of “donor fatigue” in 1948. Independent agencies saw such stories as an effort by Community Chests to strong-arm them into a combined fund drive. “A tiny group of professional fund-raisers is trying to take away your freedom to support *specific* causes,” charged Albert Maisel in *Cosmopolitan* in 1951. Local Chests began to integrate some health funds into their drives, starting with Detroit in 1949, renaming themselves “United Funds,” in a path that would eventually bring the organizations toward the contemporary United Way title. The national health agencies,

⁶⁷⁷ Ford, p. 120-121; United Way of America, *People and Events: A History of the United Way* (Alexandria, VA: United Way of America, 1977), p. 122.

however, resisted federation through the 1950s. "Cancer, Heart and Polio are teaming up apparently in their attack in local communities," reported a national Chest executive in 1956.⁶⁷⁸

Competition for voluntary funds, and the inclusion of more groups within the Community Chest/United Fund umbrella, limited the potential growth of family agencies. The majority of family agencies got the bulk of their support from Chests; over half received at least 80 percent of their income from local Chests. They were still one of the principal beneficiaries of local voluntary fundraising, taking an average of 17 percent of Chest appropriations in a survey of 150 Chests taken in 1950. But agencies felt themselves getting squeezed by other organizations during the 1950s. Ralph Ormsby of Philadelphia Family Service claimed in 1958 that "any examination of the direction of Chest or United Funds money shows that the casework field hasn't been getting an increasingly proportionate share."⁶⁷⁹ Fundraising concerns crowded out other topics among local executives. Dawson Bradshaw of Family Service of Saint Paul went to a meeting of regional FSAA executives in 1954, hoping that the session on "Relationship of Agency to the Community" might be a chance to discuss some of the insights emerging from the Family Centered Project of Saint Paul. Unfortunately, he said, the discussion got bogged down in "how an agency can sell itself to the Community Chest to get more money from the chest for new programs." Dorothy Cason, capturing the mood of many family agency executives in 1957, said her absolute first priority was financing

⁶⁷⁸ Oren Stephens, "Spots on the Feast of Charity," *Nation's Business* (May 1948): 47-49, 60-61; Albert Q. Maisel, "Where Does Your Charity Money Go?" *Cosmopolitan* (July 1951): 53, 153-154; Morton Sontheimer, "Charity's Civil War," *Cosmopolitan* (Oct. 1952): 36-37; Chest quote from *People and Events*, p. 135, see p. 117-156 generally.

⁶⁷⁹ "Support of Member Agencies in 1949," *Highlights* (Nov. 1950): 129-131; Ford, p. 118; FSAA Executives' Conference, 1958, p. 83.

services. Growing waiting lists pointed to “the need for sufficient personnel to man those services when and if we get sufficient finances.”⁶⁸⁰ In short, severe organizational constraints directed Family Service of Northern Delaware and other voluntary family agencies to circumscribe their social responsibility. Pointing to lack of resources, both financial and staff, they aspired to focus their efforts on the clientele who could benefit most from their aid: those who were motivated and oriented toward using the supportive casework services, and those for whom financial need was not their only, or most pressing, concern.

Turning away from the poor was also the result of the tacit New Deal compromise of “New Alignments” that envisioned a more perfect public welfare state that would meet its commitments and allow voluntary agencies room to experiment on the margins and with different groups. “New Alignments” had become the party line of private family service agencies and had been rhetorically reaffirmed by both voluntary sector leaders and government officials throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s. There was almost a ritualism to its invocation in social work circles. Martha Branscombe, a social worker in Alabama, argued to an audience in 1950 there that “government should provide those basic services that should be available to all. The voluntary agencies should make a continuous contribution in new areas or in providing supplementary or complementary services for individualized or specialized needs that are difficult to provide under a public program.”⁶⁸¹ The intellectual attraction of such a division, though, tended to paper over the fact that in fact the government was not providing, in places like Alabama, either

⁶⁸⁰ Transcript, FSAA Executives Conference, Apr. 26-26, 1957, p. 5, Folder 20, Box 7, FSAA.

⁶⁸¹ Martha Branscombe, “The Role of the Private Agency in Community Service,” speech to the Alabama Conference of Social Work, May 26, 1950, Folder “Function 1951-55,” Box 31, FSAA.

much in the way of “basic services” and certainly not to “all.” Private agencies could not meet basic needs either, but, facing the seemingly insurmountable problem of convincing public officials to act, they fell back on invoking a division of labor that often amounted to a collective abdication of responsibility.

Even radicals within the social work movement accepted this rationale of division of labor, with a voluntary sector that was experimental and flexible in anticipating new needs—but urged family agencies to be more forceful advocates for public social provision. Bertha Reynolds, perhaps the most vocal spokesperson for client-oriented, democratically controlled social casework, thought that voluntary agencies could play a vital role in pushing the boundaries of social service as flexible experimenters. In reality, though, she found that family agencies had been too eager to move out of the field of financial assistance and away from the most deprived in their communities. “Mr. Swift’s chart has been followed in one respect,” she noted in 1948, “limitation of relief-giving by private agencies.” Casework agencies were moving further and further from the poor, she repeated in 1951. “Most agencies do not intentionally make it their policy to avoid serious social problems, but it is easy to refine one’s techniques to the point where only relatively refined people can make use of them.”⁶⁸² The experience of the Family Society of Wilmington certainly tended to confirm these trends. Similarly, a study of the Family Service Society of Metropolitan Detroit noted that black clients tended not to come back for more than two interviews, while of the white clients, those on the higher socio-

⁶⁸² Bertha Reynolds, *Advance or Retreat for Private Family Service?* (New York: United Office and Professional Workers of America, [1948]), p. 19; Reynolds, *Social Work and Social Living: Explorations in Philosophy and Practice* (New York: Citadel Press, 1951): 4.

economic end were more attuned to “intellectual and psychiatric phraseology” and got more out of the agency’s services than poorer clients.⁶⁸³

Analyses such as Reynolds were relatively rare during the 1950s. Her voice in particular was muted as she was marginalized for her leftist politics.⁶⁸⁴ But a gradual critique of social work’s “disengagement from the poor,” as Richard Cloward would later call it, emerged in the 1950s and focused on the professionalism of social workers. An article in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1957 portrayed social workers as “preoccupied with a strange game of musical chairs called the search for professional status,” searching for middle class clients who would be responsive to their training. In professional journals, intermingled with articles on refining psychological insights for use with a variety of clients, one would occasionally find a plea for social workers to re-engage with the social issues that had once preoccupied the profession.⁶⁸⁵

But private agencies could point to what they believed was an increasing demand for such professional services to counter demands for moving closer to the poor. Newer agencies tended to attract clients more oriented toward counseling rather than charity. In 1951, a recently opened office of the Jewish Family Service Association in Cleveland reported that almost all of the new cases they saw were for help in family relationships or individual adjustments, and many of the old cases were people who had received aid in the 1920s and 1930s, returning this time for help with domestic problems instead of

⁶⁸³ Charlotte Becker, “Styles of Life of Clients of a Family Service Agency,” (MSW, Wayne State University, 1955), p. 9, 36, 46.

⁶⁸⁴ Bertha Reynolds, *An Uncharted Journey: Fifty Years of Growth in Social Work* (New York: Citadel Press, 1963).

⁶⁸⁵ Quote in John Ehrenreich, *The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the U.S.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 189.

money.⁶⁸⁶ Agencies that had a broader focus, with more concrete services or with a longer history of relief giving, struggled through the 1950s to make it clear that they were counseling agencies first and foremost. Arthur Kruse, of the Family Service Association of Cleveland argued that if they failed to “establish a paramount place for ourselves in the community as a family counseling agency versus being a department store serving the family,” the community would set up a separate family counseling agency. Similarly, Ralph Ormsby of Family Service of Philadelphia urged agencies to “shuck off” older functions and move toward the “very complex family relationship counseling that we are beginning to get a real demand for from the community”—precisely what Anne Bender had tried to do in Wilmington.⁶⁸⁷ Of existing agencies, 75 percent wanted the national agency to provide more research on marital counseling, 56 percent wanted more on casework with children, and 47 percent wanted more on casework with the aged.⁶⁸⁸

The pervasiveness of marital and relationship advice in the popular media, and its interweaving with the expertise of therapeutic professions, may have helped feed a genuine, growing interest in seeking advice from places like family service agencies. It was certainly not for any lack of trying on the part of the FSAA’s Public Relations Office. The FSAA established relationships with a range of popular magazines, particularly women’s magazines such as *McCalls*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, and *Today’s Woman*, which often employed columnists with a social welfare focus. The FSAA arranged to co-produce two remarkable series in the early 1950s that combined the expertise of its social casework staff with the writers of *Better Homes & Gardens* and

⁶⁸⁶ Anne Schwartz, “A New District Office Examines Its Services,” *Highlights* (July 1951): 97-100.

⁶⁸⁷ Minutes, FSAA Executives’ Conference.

⁶⁸⁸ “Agency Opinion on Major Issues,” April 1955, Folder 11, Box 9, FSAA.

McCalls. The first, “What’s Wrong With This Family?” ran for two years in *BH&G* from 1950 to 1952. A typical column (“Prepared in cooperation with the Family Service Association of America”) featured a four-photo series exploring a family situation. In January, 1952, the column explored the case of 14-year old “tomboy” Ginger who preferred to go bowling with her father rather than to dance lessons. Asked at the end of the column, “What’s wrong with this family?” the reader turned to the back of the magazine to find the answer. In this case, the parents were complimented for desiring to help Ginger develop good social skills. But the mother was criticized for worrying too much about Ginger’s tomboy qualities, and readers were assured that without undue pressure, “Ginger’s natural desire to be feminine” would assert itself. Father was chided for wanting to make Ginger into the son he wished he had, and that if he could show her that he wanted her to be feminine, “it would help her give up her tomboy ways.” The message was not hard to miss: parental dynamics (and particularly mothers) could have an important impact on a child’s “normal” development. Other situations included a grandmother who constantly criticized her son and daughter-in-law’s child-rearing practices; a father who felt guilty about a fishing trip rather than a family vacation; and parents who covered up their fighting in front of their children. In the latter situation, the column concludes that “a skilled family counselor might help them, give them guidance in how to achieve their goal—the protection of their children.”⁶⁸⁹

McCalls magazine, from 1953 to 1954, explained “Eight Reasons Why Marriages Fail,” introduced by Reuben Hill, Research Professor on Family Life at the University of

⁶⁸⁹ “What’s Wrong With This Family?” *Better Homes & Gardens* (Dec. 1951): p. 15-16, 187; and *BH&G* (Jan. 1952): 12-13, 94. The series ran regularly from November 1950 to June 1952. In March 1950, *BH&G* declared, with the help of the FSAA, that “Little Boys Make Lousy Husbands.” See Lawrence Galton, *BH&G* (March 1950): 41, 283-289.

North Carolina, and concluded with a note that the Family Service of America “provides professional counseling services on personal and family problems.” Each scenario, starting with “Not Knowing what a Happy Marriage Is Like,” through “Unsatisfactory Sex Relations,” and ending with “Different Kinds of Family Background,” centered on a counseling session with a family service counselor with an unhappy couple. Gradually, in each, the story moves from a visit to the counselor, usually initiated by the woman with the man brought reluctantly in later. Through a series of interviews, the problems were often traced back to some patterns in their parents own relationship. As the initial article observed, “that *marriage doesn’t create new problems so much as it magnifies old ones*, and that the dice are heavily loaded against the success of a marriage into which *both* people have carried serious emotional difficulties rooted in their past.” The resolutions were rarely idyllic, but with an indication that, after a serious investment of time, the marriage “is going along a lot better than they suspected it could.”⁶⁹⁰ Local newspaper publicity arranged by family agencies struck similar themes. Visiting the Family and Children’s Center of Nashville, “an obscure building at 2300 West End ave., where a dozen experienced men and women make it their business to soak up trouble,” a newspaper writer found that the agency’s counselors did not claim “to have a formula to cure all these ills”. Rather than pointing to experiences in childhood, the Nashville agency attributed marriage problems to “great personality differences between husband and wife.”⁶⁹¹ Neither promised miracles, but showed that an earnest

⁶⁹⁰ “Eight Reasons Why Marriages Fail,” *McCalls* (July 1953): 23, 34. The series ran regularly from July 1953 to November 1954.

⁶⁹¹ George Barker, “Can You Patch a Marriage?” *Nashville Tennessean Magazine* (Nov. 30, 1958): 24-25, 64.

effort, in conjunction with skilled help, could enable couples to realize more from their marriage than they thought possible.

While some media coverage focused and promoted the work of family agencies, others blended family caseworkers in with a broader therapeutic establishment. In “Who’s Driving You Crazy,” for example, from *Woman’s Home Companion* in February, 1952, Howard Whitman not only quoted caseworkers from Family Service of New Haven and the Family Service Association of Washington, DC, on his country-wide exploration of troubled relationships, he also turned to: in South Carolina, the staff at two mental hygiene clinics, the state mental health director, the Edgewood Sanitarium Foundation and the Mental Health Foundation, and the chaplain at the state hospital for the mentally disturbed; in Washington, a psychologist at the Washington Institute of Mental Hygiene, two mental health consultants at the U.S. Public Health Service, and a psychologist at the National Institute of Mental Health; for good measure, he visited the director of the Psychosomatic Clinic at Duke University Hospital, the Yale University Psychiatric Clinic, and the Menninger Foundation.⁶⁹² Family social workers were accorded their measure of expertise, but this article did not make clear the specific, distinctive contributions that family counseling might offer versus a psychologist, psychiatrist, or visiting a mental health clinic.

⁶⁹² Howard Whitman, “Who’s Driving You Crazy?” *Woman’s Home Companion* (Feb. 1952): 32, 108-112. Whitman followed up with “Do You Hate Your Parents?” *WHC* (Mar. 1953): 44, 95-98, pointing to the Baltimore Family and Children’s Society as well as a host of other therapeutic experts. Whitman was one of several writers with relationships with the FSAA; Claire Holcomb of *The Rotarian* was another; freelance writer Morton Sontheimer; and Margaret Hickey, public affairs editor of *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Hickey in particular was closely allied with social work; a lawyer, journalist, and political activist, she served in executive capacities in the National Conference of Social Work in the 1950s and 1960s.

Family service agencies, often under the rubric of “family life education,” also conducted local publicity with a pastiche of “interpretive” materials. The postwar period, through the 1970s, was the heyday of 16-millimeter educational films that dealt with a variety of social issues. Most notable were the classroom films on social and mental hygiene that attempted to set behavioral standards for the baby-boom generation with such classics as “Are You Popular?” (1947), “The Benefits of Looking Ahead,” (1950), “Right or Wrong? (Making Moral Decisions)” (1951).⁶⁹³ Another sub-genre of “factual films” in the postwar era were those promoting social awareness to adults. Production companies such as the Mental Health Film Board and national social agencies created a host of informational films that were used to publicize agency programs or consciousness about social issues. Films on foster care such as “The Frightened Child,” “A Baby Named X,” and “Your Very Own” were regulars on the circuit. Other classics included “Angry Boy” (1950), showing a psychiatrist and social worker working with a boy who was acting out in school, and with his mother to ease the home tensions that created his anger. These mixed with documentary films such as “The Quiet One,” a 1948 film with commentary by James Agee that followed a young African American boy’s treatment at a psychiatric facility. They created the raw material for a substrata of popular culture circulating around contemporary social problems that promoted a diffuse notion of “understanding” as well as respect for the advice of experts.

The FSAA’s heightened awareness of the need for public interpretation of its programs in the postwar era led it to produce its own educational film, *A Family Affair*, in 1957, with the help of the Mental Health Film Board. This half-hour 16-millimeter film

⁶⁹³ These films are available at the Internet Movie Archive, <http://www.archive.org/movies/bytitle.html>. See also, Ken Smith, *Mental Hygiene: Classroom Films, 1945-1970* (New York: Blast Books, 1999).

portrayed a family facing a challenge when their son, upon graduating from high school, decides he wants to try to become an actor rather than to go on to college and become a lawyer as his mother had hoped. The situation caused the husband and wife to start arguing, and the wife to visit the local family service agency to discuss their problems, with the husband soon following. The film dwells on the experience of the father—possibly because most FSAA studies showed that most of their marriage counseling dealt with women and they were trying to legitimate the practice among men. The “problem” is strikingly clear: a domineering but insecure wife paired with a husband whose own lack of satisfaction in his career has left him to be ineffectual in helping his son. Gradually, the social worker helps encourage the father to strike out in a new career direction, and his happiness helps ease tensions at home and helps the wife accept their son’s exploration of his own career. The overall message epitomized private family services’ postwar image: of a “normal” family seeking temporary help working through problems and realizing their higher potential, with the help of a sympathetic expert. Cloying and patronizing when viewed fifty years later, it was nonetheless typical of the portrayal of therapeutic experts across the professions.⁶⁹⁴

Local agencies used these resources avidly for a specialized audience of board members, civic groups, and family life education classes. Jewish Family and Children’s Service of Minneapolis showed “Angry Boy” and other films to their board of directors to stimulate discussions about counseling and health family life. In Nashville, the Family and Childrens’ service showed movies on adoption, as well as “A Family Affair,” to a variety of community groups in talks about their agency. “Plays for Living,” a production

⁶⁹⁴ Mental Health Film Board and the FSAA, “A Family Affair” (Chicago, IL: International Film Bureau, 1955), Founders Memorial Library, Northern Illinois University.

arm of the American Theatre Wing Company, also proved a widely used method of interpreting agency services to boards of directors and community groups. Plays for Living originated as a means to disseminate information about social service resources for war workers during World War Two, and evolved into a production company that presented original plays that dealt with contemporary social issues, and provided a forum for discussion of those issues. A *New York Times* review of “People Seem to Lose Their Way,” a postwar Plays for Living production, thought it “oversimplified and the solution was sentimental to a degree that would be intolerable before a paying audience of pleasure-seekers on Broadway,” but generally praised the play as having a “genuine direct and emotional appeal.” Family agencies used these resources as another venue to attempt to dramatize the relatively intangible areas of human need they dealt with.⁶⁹⁵

The content and ideology of popular portrayals of the family during the 1950s has been a subject of much attention, both scholarly and popular. That which emanated from family service agencies was squarely in the mainstream of popular concerns about the family, though not monolithic. Most identified the wife or mother as one of the key sources of problem in the home: too smothering of her children, too sexually distant from her husband, and so on. Many, but not all, raised questions about the propriety of women working outside the home. A strong undercurrent of conformity within peer groups and among neighbors pervades the material. The presence of psychological or personality problems in these relationships pointedly suggested the need for an expert to help untangle them.

⁶⁹⁵William F. Moynihan, *An Agency for All Ages: The Story of Family and Children's Service, 1943-1993* (Nashville: Family and Children's Service, 1993), p. 33-48; FS St. Paul Directors, March 4, 1960, Box 2, FSSP; Beatrice Levy to Sidney Hollander, Oct. 5, 1962. Box 32, Section III, Hollander Papers; Brooks Atkinson, “Jackstraw Drama,” *New York Times*, Oct. 13, 1946.

It is difficult to gauge reception of such publicity, its broader effect on popular perceptions of counseling and therapeutic help, and its specific impact on family agency clientele. Cultural critics of the period identify in either the stress of coping with massive and contradictory expectations in marriage and parenthood, or in the guilt of having failed to live up to those expectations, some of the fuel for the fire of the growth of counseling such as that offered by FSAA agencies.⁶⁹⁶ Most scholars of the therapeutic professions tend to take the connection between media coverage and increasing consumer demand for granted.⁶⁹⁷ Hints of such connections arise in the records of such agencies. A report from the Pre-Marriage and Marriage Counseling Service of Richmond, Virginia, a cooperative venture between the local Family Service Society, child guidance clinic, visiting nurse association, public schools, and the Ministerial Union, noted that about a third of their clients came from local newspaper publicity and an article in a national woman's magazine. The Family Society of Delaware wrote to the FSAA to note their appreciation for "the mass publicity on a national level." However, a study done of FSAA member agencies in 1960 found only six percent of their clients came on the basis of an article in the mass media. Most trusted as a source of referral were friends, neighbors, or relatives, 23.2 percent, who may have been reached by this diffuse publicity on counseling.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁶ Christopher Lasch attacked the therapeutic professions for relieving parents of responsibility but leaving them with guilt, "which in turn increased demand for psychiatric services." Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 109. Susan J. Douglas observed that women "smoked, or drank, or took Miltowns, or saw a shrink, or yelled a lot at us" in reaction to the "misogyny of American culture" as reflected in 1950s media portrayals of women's roles. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female in the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), p. 55.

⁶⁹⁷ Grob, p. 112.

⁶⁹⁸ Beatrice Marion, "Marriage Counseling as a Cooperative Community Project," [1950] in Folder 11, Box 26, Daniels Papers; Bender to Clark Blackburn, Feb. 1, 1955, File 44, Box 40, FSAA; Dorothy F. Beck, *Patterns in Use of Family Agency Service* (New York: FSAA, 1961), p. 13.

Moving from the broader public relations efforts to work within local therapeutic and social service circles, it seems that casework agencies were becoming less prominent as apostles of therapy, as they had been in the late 1940s, and instead were benefiting from the steadily rising stars of psychiatry and psychology. Increasing access to psychiatry was a critical element of the expansion of these networks generally, and critical to the legitimacy of family societies that reached out into counseling. The “demonstration” of the usefulness of caseworkers that had proved popular in the late 1940s and early 1950s had either worked well or faltered: similar agencies hired caseworkers if they found it valuable, or the relationships lapsed. Moreover, the shortage of caseworkers nationally made family agencies less likely to loan out workers for such experiments. Professional psychological knowledge was at more of a premium. In some locales, family agencies still served as a resource to promote therapeutic approaches. The Family Service Department of the Neighborhood House of Santa Barbara lent its staff psychiatrist to the county outpatient clinic in order to add psychiatric service to the clinic. In Nashville, local board members of Family and Children’s Service led the drive to establish a Family Court to handle domestic relations cases. In other areas of the country, agencies struggled to obtain professional resources. In Louisville, Kentucky, the staff at the family agency was desperate to obtain psychiatric consultation, but was forced to contract with a psychiatrist from outside the community to provide monthly seminars and case consultation, as the staff at the local mental hygiene clinic were overwhelmed. By building their annual meeting around a presentation by the psychiatrist on “normal development of child and adolescent” and “normal development of married life,” they were able to convince their board to fund the consultant regularly. By 1954, 75 percent of

FSAA members used psychiatrists or psychoanalysts for case consultation on a regular basis.⁶⁹⁹ By 1956, the FSAA was issuing standards for psychiatric consultation. The Jewish Family and Children's Bureau of Baltimore was happy to note that their relationship with Dr. Isadore Tuerk of Spring Grove State Hospital, in which she served as a consultant in problem cases, occasionally as a direct therapist, and as a teacher in seminars, was within the FSAA guidelines.⁷⁰⁰

These connections to therapeutic networks were not simply for "professional hedonism," though undoubtedly, the trained social workers felt they were building their professional skills by working closely with psychiatrists. There seemed to be an actual demand for such service. The Jewish Family Service of Cleveland reported that people calling to ask for appointments inquired, "Do you have a psychologist? Do you have a psychiatrist? Psychiatric social workers?" The increasing cultural legitimacy of therapy for a segment of the population, and the efforts family agencies had made to identify themselves with that legitimacy, had paid off. Bolstering the psychiatric qualifications of the agency had an appeal to another group of clients as well. A study by the Jewish Family Service of St. Paul examined why they received so few referrals from doctors and lawyers. The answer seemed to be that they doubted the professional competence of the staff at the agency, and had to be convinced by meeting the social workers. But if the agency had a psychiatric consultant, it was raised in the estimation of these professionals.

⁶⁹⁹ Mildred Valentine, "Organizing a Mental Hygiene Clinic," *Highlights* (Feb. 1950): 22-23; Mildred Bateman, "Psychiatric Consultation in an Agency with Limited Resources," *Highlights* (Apr. 1951): 49-53; "Yearly Report on Functions," April 1954, Folder "Functions, 1951-54," Box 31, FSAA; Moynihan, p. 30-32.

⁷⁰⁰ Board of Directors Minutes, Jewish Family and Childrens' Bureau, Apr. 27, 1956, Folder JFCB 1955-58, Box 27, Series III, Hollander Papers.

The Family Society of Delaware, wondering about a similar problem, read this study and resolved to increase its efforts to secure a psychiatrist.⁷⁰¹

Social workers were becoming more comfortable with their roles as therapeutic professionals in the 1950s, and better training brought agency practices closer in line with the aspirations of family service leaders. The Freudian theory of the 1920s and 1930s, while exciting to many students, had seemed for many too complex and inward to have much application in the types of social agencies they worked in. The evolution of psychological thinking in the postwar era, particularly the rise of ego psychology, made such theory more accessible to social workers and more applicable in day-to-day practice. According to Alfred Kahn, a leading social work educator in the 1960s, ego psychology helped form a bridge between the inner world of psychoanalysis and the outer world of culture and the environment. Previous psychoanalytic theory had focused more exclusively on the super-ego, or conscience, or the id, or impulse, both of which demanded a more introspective approach. A focus on the ego, which in Freudian theory served as the integrator between the psyche and social reality, moved the therapists' role outward, in helping the client deal with changing behavior in the external world. Professional caseworkers, who saw themselves working at some sort of psychosocial crossroads, embraced the insights of ego psychology. It was easier for most social workers who absorbed some psychoanalytic theory to imagine themselves acting to help

⁷⁰¹ Schwartz, "A New District Office;" Joseph Taylor, "What Doctors and Lawyers Think About Us," *Highlights* (Jan. 1953): 12-14; Directors, FSW, Mar. 16, 1954. A pamphlet of the Family Service Organization of Louisville, Kentucky, distributed to local doctors, stressed that the FSO was staffed by workers trained in "accredited Schools of Social Work" and pointed to the agency's "Expert Supervision" and "Psychiatric Consultation." Copy of pamphlet in Stanley Blostein and Mary Ann Millet, "A Study of the Community Councils, Family Service Organization, Louisville, Kentucky, 1940-1957," (MSW, University of Louisville, 1958).

build up and support a clients' ego rather than to attempt a re-ordering of their entire personality.⁷⁰² These sorts of distinctions were pushed by the psychiatrists who worked with social workers, and by the social work mainstream. In *Scope and Methods of the Family Service Agency* (1953), an important statement of goals for voluntary family agencies, the FSAA declared that the primary therapeutic tools for social workers were "maintaining adaptive patterns," which meant helping a client work within his existing patterns of behavior, and "modification of adaptive patterns," which aimed at reducing anxiety and destructive defenses. "Personality Reorganization" was outside of the scope of social work therapy. In local agencies, the dividing lines were messier, but usually the test was "severity." The Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis, in consultation with its psychiatrist, decided that the agency would handle children's cases where disturbed behavior seemed a normal product of a disturbed home or where the problems were "inseparably embedded in environmental conditions"; the psychiatrist would handle severe cases of mental or emotional problems, severe anti-social behavior, or "extremely rigid internalization." At Family Service of Saint Paul, their psychiatric consultant told them they should be able to handle cases such as: people with borderline intelligence who were in trouble with the law (if they could gain their confidence); ambulatory schizophrenics with delusions who were benign but needed lots of contact with the worker; neurotic patients who were anxious, alcoholics and their spouse, and acting out psychotics (!). As with the difficult cases in welfare, though, this division of labor sometimes resulted in an abdication of responsibility; some observers complained

⁷⁰² Kermit Wiltse, "The Hopeless Family," *SWF* 1958, p. 143; Isabell Stamm, "Ego Psychology in the Emerging Theoretical Base of Casework," in Alfred Kahn, ed., *Issues in American Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 80-109; Alfred Kahn, *Planning Community Services for Children in Trouble* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 356-362.

that psychiatric referral often functioned as a way to “solve problems by transferring cases.”⁷⁰³

By contributing both publicity and personnel to the construction of therapeutic networks in the 1950s, voluntary family agencies helped build the legitimacy of utilizing such approaches in public policy. Through demonstration efforts, such as the St. Paul projects, and local educational efforts and national public relations drives, family service agencies and the voluntary fundraising and planning organizations they were embedded in, helped make plausible the potential of therapeutic help among key constituencies in local communities. National publicity gave a therapeutic patina to case work agencies. Voluntary planning groups, such as the Welfare Council of Delaware, created bases of local support for counseling efforts. Local publicity to social agency boards, professionals such as doctors and lawyers, and civic and parents' groups, helped normalize the idea that expert counseling was a legitimate form of “giving.” In legitimizing counseling for a relatively “independent” clientele in the 1950s, they also helped pave the way to consider such techniques in public policy for more “dependent” people.

But the relative, and varying, success of family agencies in carving out a portion of the therapeutic market for themselves troubled a number of people within the orbit of voluntary institutions, and a slowly growing body of critics in the social work profession generally. The external criticism would reach a crescendo in the 1960s, and will be dealt with in the subsequent chapter. During the 1950s, though, a number of progressives

⁷⁰³ FSAA, *Scope and Methods of the Family Service Agency* (New York: FSAA, 1953), p. 19-20; Directors, Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis, Dec. 8, 1954, Box 5, JFCSM Records, Minnesota Historical Society; Directors, FSSP, Sept. 2, 1955; Family Centered Project Discussion Group Minutes, July 2, 1954, Folder 8, Box 1, FCP Records.

within voluntary family service attempted to push agencies to uphold both their therapeutic practices and a broader commitment to improving the lives of the poor through social change. Elizabeth Wickenden, already emerging in the early 1950s as a central figure in the nexus of voluntary social agencies, public welfare policy makers, and federal legislators, complained in 1953 that

I am sometimes troubled to find the idea held in some quarters that true social work, and especially true casework, is a kind of junior psychiatry, a very private therapeutic relationship between worker and client. For if this is characteristic of social work—whatever its agency setting—it is difficult to see how we can long hold our own against the expanding field of mental health, and it is impossible to see in such a private affair any scope whatsoever for social action.⁷⁰⁴

Contrast this with the voice of Ralph Ormsby, executive director of Family Service of Philadelphia. An outspoken advocate within the FSAA for focusing on improving family casework and agency efficiency, Ormsby saw family agencies relatively removed from the issues of poverty. Offering a counterpoint to Wickenden, he said in 1958,

My main trouble with the social action thing is that we keep bringing it up and never talk about it. I think there are many issues we used to speak on which were out of our casework evidence. I think our caseload is shifting enough so we really don't have the evidence to back up a lot of the things we claim to know so much about. I'd include housing and public assistance. I don't think we know too much about either subject out of our family counseling. I'm interested in housing and public assistance as a citizen but I don't think we have a hell of a lot to contribute that I can marshal out of our caseload today.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁴ Elizabeth Wickenden, "The Family Agency: A Social Force," *Family Service Highlights* (May 1953): 79.

⁷⁰⁵ FSAA Executives' Conference, May 8-10, 1958, Folder 20, Box 7, FSAA.

Activists such as Wickenden strove to encourage voluntary agencies to balance their commitment to helping individuals and families with emotional problems with an effort to bear witness to the other problems of those families that could be solved by improving aspects of America's public welfare state. Administrators, and many caseworkers, such as Ormsby wondered if social action was another antiquated element of Progressive-era casework. Their efforts reveal the close relationship that remained between voluntary agencies and public welfare, but also the caution and structural limitations that made voluntary agencies reluctant reformers in the 1950s.

As shown in Chapter Four, the national leadership of the FSAA came out of World War Two determined to help push to complete the American welfare state, adding their voice to support for national health insurance and improved public housing. But outside of some key staff members and the support of national Board members such as Sidney Hollander, the effort waned in the late 1940s. Within the FSAA and other national agencies, there was a rhetorical commitment to the role voluntary agencies could play in stimulating better public welfare. Ralph Blanchard of the national organization of Community Chests said that voluntary agencies should play a central role in community planning for new services, and that once they were determined to be successful, should help introduce such measures in the legislature. In the FSAA, the legacy of its leadership's involvement in promoting New Deal welfare measures hung heavily over their head. The Executive Committee noted that "while the Association has a rather rich and long history in terms of supporting social legislation," they had no real direction in the early 1950s on how to continue to do so. But a sense of unease with the stability of public assistance may have reawakened the FSAA's interest. The attacks on public

assistance in the late 1940s and early 1950s culminated in efforts in several states, most notably Indiana, to publicize the names of welfare recipients; such efforts were aided by a Congressional amendment in 1951 that prohibited the Bureau of Public Assistance from penalizing such states. The FSAA issued several public statements on this basic affront to social work practice, and with prodding from Hollander, reconvened a Public Issues Committee in 1952 that would draft positions for the FSAA to take on social legislation.⁷⁰⁶

The proposals put forth by the Committee to the FSAA were standard fare for moderate liberals in the 1950s. The FSAA approved of Eisenhower's expansion of Social Security in 1954; called for more social services to be provided in areas where defense expansion for the Korean War was impacting communities; pushed for improved unemployment benefits and for federal aid for public assistance outside of the Social Security categorical programs. Staff member Earl Parker testified to Congress on behalf of the FSAA in support of the organization of a department of "Health, Education, and Security" in 1950 and in favor of federal aid to combat juvenile delinquency in 1957. Housing was a particular area of interest. In 1955 the Committee noted that there was a feeling that they needed to be more aggressive on the issue, "presenting the facts as to need to the appropriate Congressional committees," but despaired in meetings with officials from the Housing and Home Finance Agency, whom they found conservative.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶ Ralph Blanchard, "Progress by Planning," *Survey* (June 1950): 325; Executive Committee Minutes, FSAA, Oct 24, 1950; Nov. 9, 1951, Folder 13, Box 6; Dec. 11, 1952, Folder 14, Box 6, FSAA; "Public Assistance Attack," *Highlights* (Nov. 1951): 144; "Shall We Have a Witch Hunt?" *Highlights* (Dec. 1951): 145-148; "Public Welfare Administration," *Highlights* (Jan. 1952): 9-11; "Private Lives: Public Funds," *Highlights* (Apr. 1952): 52-54.

⁷⁰⁷ Ex. Comm. Minutes, FSAA, Oct. 30, 1953, Folder 15, Box 6; Committee on Public Issues Minutes, FSAA, Jan. 16, 1954; Oct. 29, 1954; Jan. 14, 1955; Apr. 12, 1957, Folder 1, Box 14, FSAA. [title for "Reorganization Plan No. 27 of 1950], p. 132; [title for "To Combat and Control Juvenile Delinquency], p.

As the Welfare Council of Delaware had found out, though, simply taking positions yea or nay on a given piece of legislation did not impact the decision making process significantly. The FSAA leadership attempted to use more direct methods to reach policymakers as well. Upon Eisenhower's assumption of office in 1953, FSAA president Brooks Potter wrote to Oveta Culp Hobby, the new secretary of recently organized Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, introducing himself and the FSAA as nonpolitical as well as nonprofit, and hoped to come meet with her to offer her the FSAA's assistance. Hobby demurred, which frustrated the FSAA board. But though Potter said he had friends who were political friends of Hobby, he didn't want to force the issue until they had an occasion to need to speak with her. However, they did score a meeting with Nelson Rockefeller, then serving as Under Secretary to Hobby. Rockefeller gave them a courteous 45 minutes and expressed his appreciation, in particular that they came "without an axe to grind—but rather an offer of assistance by a group maintaining its autonomy and independence."⁷⁰⁸ But the FSAA had better luck further down the administrative ladder. Jay Roney, head of the Bureau of Public Assistance after Eisenhower removed Jane Hoey in 1953, met with the Public Issues committee to discuss their thoughts on welfare agencies "delivering more 'service' as the assistance load decreases," which the committee approved of. The appointment of Charles Schottland as Social Security Administrator in 1954 put an even friendlier face in the executive wing. Schottland had worked in the voluntary sector in the 1930s before moving into public

126. Earl Parker of the FSAA wrote Eisenhower and Albert Cole of the Housing and Home Finance Agency to complain that Cole's declaration of 1956 as "Home Improvement Year" diverted emphasis from the more pressing problem of low-income housing. Cole to Parker, Feb. 20, 1956; Parker to Cole, Feb. 27, 1956, "Housing and Welfare 1954-1956," Folder 58, NSWA Supplement II, SWHA.

⁷⁰⁸ Brooks Potter to Oveta Culp Hobby, May 18, 1953; Jack Beardwood to Potter, June 1, 1953; Ex. Comm. Minutes, FSAA, June 11, 1953; Sept. 18, 1953; Oct. 30, 1953, all Folder 15, Box 6, FSAA.

welfare administration, and maintained contacts and friends in the social work community. As Commissioner of Public Welfare in California in the early 1950s, he had developed good relationships with a number of family service agencies in the state. Schottland met with FSAA leaders in 1955 and told them the best role they could play is to marshal evidence of shortcomings in public welfare programs that could be used to improve them.⁷⁰⁹

Despite the fairly regular contact with high-level HEW officials, the FSAA exercised little clout, and sought little more than ritual meetings or demonstrations of concern. A consultant in public welfare policy told the Public Issues Committee that the FSAA "has been slow in getting into the Washington situation," compared to groups like the American Public Welfare Association and the American Association of Social Workers, both of which had Washington representatives who worked on legislative issues. The APWA is a useful point of comparison. Also technically a voluntary organization, it spoke for public welfare administrators across the country, and since the 1940s had built a relatively sophisticated network of contacts in Washington. The APWA represented an organized constituency invested in strengthening public welfare structures, and provided an independent lobbying arm that nonetheless worked closely with activists within the federal bureaucracy. Even a cursory examination of their lobbying efforts demonstrates high degree of effort and sophistication toward intervening in the legislative

⁷⁰⁹ "New Regime In California," *Survey* (May 1950): 259-260; Earl Parker to Jay Roney, Dec. 28, 1954, Box 21, Section III, Hollander Papers; Committee on Public Issues, FSAA, Oct. 29, 1954; Jan. 14, 1955; May 2, 1955, Folder 1, Box 14; Ex. Comm., FSAA, Oct. 15, 1954, Folder 16, Box 6; June 17, 1955, Folder 17, Box 6, FSAA.

process on a number of social welfare issues.⁷¹⁰ Surveying their sporadic and relatively superficial engagement in public welfare policymaking, the Executive Committee admitted “to date, the FSAA has not had an effective relationship with Washington. Probably it should be more aggressive.” Rather get more aggressive, though, the FSAA itself grew less so. While adding testimony for the 1958 amendment to the Social Security Act, Clark Blackburn wrote a letter rather than testify regarding a case aided by an FSAA agency that showed the need for liberalized OASDI appropriations in 1958.⁷¹¹

To their credit, FSAA leadership was actively participating in the efforts of the National Social Welfare Assembly to speak for the voluntary sector generally on public issues in the late 1950s. Hollander, a tireless advocate for social action among voluntary agencies, and a member of innumerable boards of directors of local and national Jewish and nonsectarian voluntary boards, was trying to build both the FSAA and the National Social Welfare Assembly into advocacy groups in the mid-1950s. He helped arrange (and, through a family foundation, personally bankrolled for several years) for the NSWA to hire Elizabeth Wickenden (who was coming off a stint as the APWA’s Washington representative) to coordinate a public issues office for the assembly of voluntary groups. The NSWA, through Wickenden’s efforts, was a more forceful public presence in Washington during this period than the FSAA. But the correspondence between

⁷¹⁰ See, for example, APWA lobbying strategies on the 1956 and 1958 Social Security Amendments in folders 8 and 10, Box 27, APWA Records; N. Viswanathan, “The Role of the American Public Welfare Association in The Formulation and Development of Public Welfare Policies in the United States, 1930-1960,” DSW, Columbia University, 1961, p. 230-309. Mittelstadt, p. 90-92.

⁷¹¹ Committee on Public Issues, FSAA, May 2, 1955, Folder 1, Box 14; Exec. Comm., FSAA, Oct. 21, 1955, Folder 17, Box 6 FSAA; Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, *Social Security Legislation* 85th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1958), p. 957-958.

Wickenden and Hollander serves as a running commentary on the limits of voluntary organizations to act as social change agents. At the end of her NSW stint, Wickenden complained to Hollander that “organizations are so inherently conservative, so clearly committed to maintaining the status quo, that it seems to require some sort of outside Force.”⁷¹²

Such tentative engagement in politics was partly the nature of the beast. The FSAA itself was more trade association than social movement. Though its postwar charter specifically stated that family agencies had a responsibility to improve social conditions, its primary institutional missions were maintaining the standards of its member agencies, and generally promoting the practice of social casework. When the Public Issues Committee was developed, the Board required a unanimous vote of the Executive Committee or a three-quarters vote of the Board of Directors in favor of any policy position, a guarantee that any statements would “shy away from subjects on which the family service field might be divided.” And more pointedly, Board members voted with their feet. Attendance at Public Issues meetings, the group of Board members presumably most inclined to press for action on social issues, was consistently lackluster.⁷¹³

Moving to the local level, one can find a spectrum of attitudes toward political engagement in affiliated agencies, but with the mean hitting somewhere between caution and opposition. The strength of the FSAA was its local agencies, and in particular, the local political influence of its board members. Again, on paper, the potential for agencies

⁷¹² Wickenden to Hollander, Apr. 20, 1956; Hollander to Wickenden, Sept. 26, 1958; Hollander to Wickenden, Oct. 27, 1959; Wickenden to Hollander, Jan. 1, 1960, Box 74, Section III, Hollander Papers.

⁷¹³ *Scope and Methods*, p. 10; Ex. Comm. Minutes, FSAA, Feb. 26, 1954, Folder 15, Box 6; Earl Parker to Sidney Hollander, Aug. 9, 1954; Hollander to Parker, Oct. 2, 1954, Box 21, Section III, Hollander Papers.

to bear moral witness, and perhaps exert real political pressure, was significant. The daily contact with clients gave agencies insight into the types of problems that could be remedied by public policy. And using board members gave voluntary agencies the political cover unavailable to public welfare: if disinterested board members, probably more conservative than their social work staff, testified for the need for a given policy, it would have more impact on wary legislators. The FSAA Executive Committee concluded that “although part of the FSAA job may be lobbying, this can be done most effectively by Board members—not an employed professional.” As in Delaware, keeping social workers out of the picture was thought to be more effective politics.⁷¹⁴

But most agencies were lukewarm in response of questionnaires sent out to member agencies on their thoughts on political action. Some noted approval, including the largest agency in the country, New York’s Community Service Society. The Waltham, Massachusetts Family Service League approved of statements by the national agency but demurred from taking local action: “to do so would be very bad because of the dissention it would cause in the Board due to differences of political opinion.” The Witchita, Kansas, Family Consultation Service disapproved, “as you probably know, Kansas as a whole does not go along with a program of receiving recommendations on Federal legislative issues from anybody.” The Family Service Society of Salt Lake City, speaking for many, felt that social action should be left to other national agencies and that

⁷¹⁴ Ex. Comm., FSAA, Sept. 18, 1959, Folder 20, Box 6; Committee on Public Issues, Jan. 14, 1955, Folder 1, Box 14, FSAA

the FSAA should focus on its service to member agencies. All in all, concluded the Public Affairs Committee, "agencies were definitely reticent about legislative activity."⁷¹⁵

Voluntary agencies were more likely to become political if the public issues cut close enough to impact local agency functions. Often, these were issues lodged in welfare policy at the local or state level, rather than national. At the national level, the most significant elements of welfare state policy during the 1950 was the expansion of the social insurance aspects of Social Security, particularly following the amendments in 1954, that brought more and more people under the coverage of contributory social insurance. As many scholars have noted, social insurance surpassed public assistance as the predominant feature of the U.S. public welfare state in the 1950s. Social insurance, particularly for the elderly, combined with a relatively robust national economy, pushed poverty and welfare off of the national agenda. Poverty, of course, had not disappeared, and neither had welfare. Public assistance rolls continued to expand during the decade, driven in part by a steady rural-to-urban migration and a gradual decline in the economic fortunes of central cities.⁷¹⁶ With local and state financing figuring heavily in public assistance, these programs were under more constant political scrutiny during the 1950s, and a steady drumbeat of criticism surrounding the programs was evident from the 1950s on. While they did not match the intensity of the welfare investigations that sprouted up in the 1940s, and would again in 1960, a sense of unease about the state of public assistance was evident among welfare state activists and administrators, and criticism of

⁷¹⁵ Committee on Public Issues, Nov. 29, 1956, Folder 1, Box 14, FSAA; Caroline Robinson to Hugh Jones, Mar. 8, 1955; Nancy Heath to Jones, Feb. 17, 1955; Philip Akre to Clark Blackburn, Jan. 13, 1955; J. Allen Crockett to Blackburn, Feb. 17, 1955; "Agency Opinion on Major Issues," April 1955, all in Folder 11, Box 9, FSAA.

⁷¹⁶ Patterson, p. 80

public assistance was not difficult to find. The *Saturday Evening Post's* coverage was perhaps the most notorious: Paul Molloy's "The Relief Chislers Are Stealing Us Blind," (1951), which investigated ADC in Oklahoma, exemplified the tone of such coverage.⁷¹⁷

ADC was a particular lightning rod, and it was evident even in the early 1950s that rising rates of unmarried mothers on the ADC rolls were a political problem for the program. Bertram Black of the voluntary Jewish Board of Guardians pleaded to the American Public Welfare Association's annual gathering in 1950 for more research "to determine the effects of its programs." The Research Council on Economic Security in 1954 argued that broken families were driving public assistance, and that welfare needed to focus on "education of and for parenthood, on the social conditions that nurture family life." The FSAA itself noted the unease among public assistance officials in the late 1950s, and the "quite heavy attack" on ADC programs in a number of states.⁷¹⁸

Demonstration projects such as those in St. Paul, those under the auspices of Community Research Associates, and other studies done in the 1950s were one effort by both public and voluntary sector welfare activists to solve the problems emerging in Aid to Dependent Children. But most family agencies faced welfare politics only at moments of crisis, such as Family Service of Northern Delaware's tentative dabs at lobbying for higher public assistance standards and better-trained state personnel. Liberals within the family service movement pushed for more aggressive support for the welfare state.

Sidney Hollander wrote in *Highlights*, the FSAA newsletter aimed at board members,

⁷¹⁷ Paul Molloy, "The Relief Chislers Are Stealing Us Blind," *Saturday Evening Post* (Sept. 8, 1951): 32-33, 142-144. Welfare advocates countered such articles quickly; see the sympathetic treatment of ADC in Albert Deutsch, "Our Neediest Children," *Woman's Home Companion* (June 1952): 28, 47, 49.

⁷¹⁸ "Public Welfare Officials Meet," *Survey* (July 1950): 363; Research Council on Economic Security, *Eighteen Years of Public Assistance, 1936-1953*, no. 99 (Chicago: RCES, 1954), p. ?; Committee on Public Issues, FSAA, Apr. 12, 1957, Folder 1, Box 14. See Mittelstadt, ch. 2, 3; Bell, 59-75.

that "the very existence of his own agency depends in great measure upon the adequacy of the public services ... If the public services are good, ours will be better; if they are bad, ours will be worse." In Hollander's own back yard in Baltimore, voluntary agencies had spoken out against welfare budget cuts in the late 1940s, and did so again in 1955, where concerted action by voluntary agencies helped force the Mayor to rescind a projected 30 percent cut in local assistance budgets. Hollander personally cultivated Eleanor Levey, a board member of the Jewish Family and Children's Bureau, who in turn energized that agency's social action committee on increasing public assistance standards. To dramatize the abysmal budgets granted welfare clients, the JFCB spearheaded a luncheon co-sponsored by the major Maryland social work agencies that offered to several hundred public officials and community leaders a lunch made on the twenty cents allotted to welfare families. Hollander credited the action to a subsequent increase in appropriations for the State Department of Welfare. Records of other agencies show occasional similar efforts, often times in response to draconian cut-backs or attempts by local officials to restrict eligibility for public assistance, with some measure of success.⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁹ Sidney Hollander, "The Batting Average of Board Members," *Highlights* (Feb. 1952): 17-22; On Baltimore, see Hollander to Eleanor Levey, Mar. 25, 1958; Directors, JFCB, Oct. 28, 1958; Dec. 26, 1958, JFCB Folders, Box 27; Hollander to Wickenden, Apr. 8, 1959, Box 74; Hollander to Julius Rothman, Apr. 8, 1959, Box 1, all Section III, Hollander papers. Other examples include Family Service of St. Paul's successful efforts to change regulations in order to shorten the time allowed before the County Welfare Board could grant ADC in cases of non-support, and the active and public protests by Nashville Family and Children's Service at several attempts in the late 1950s by the Tennessee legislature to restrict children born out of wedlock from receiving ADC; Directors, FSSP, Oct. 1, 1951, Box 2, FSSP; Moynihan, *Agency for All Ages*, p. 33, 45.

Conclusion

Voluntary social agencies in the 1950s found themselves in the middle of two dynamics in public policy. The first was the widening scope of counseling-oriented “helping” within a variety of public and private institutions. The family casework practiced by private family agencies was one key element in this expanding consensus on the efficacy of therapeutic interventions in personal and social problems. By the 1950s, a range of organizations, particularly welfare planning councils and voluntary fundraising organizations, had concurred in the value of social casework, and were spreading it among the institutions where they had influence. In addition, the promotion done by family agencies both locally and nationally helped educate key local constituencies to the potential of casework in changing people’s lives for the better. In this supposedly apolitical work, they made the case plausible that counseling “services” might be useful to address social problems outside of the narrowing scope of family service agencies, though in the case of unmarried motherhood among African Americans, the agencies themselves were at a loss of how exactly to apply those services effectively.

The second was the growing sense of crisis within public welfare, and particularly public assistance. These problems manifested themselves in two ways: first, the chronic underfunding of public assistance in many states and localities, and second, the increasing unpopularity of Aid to Dependent Children due to the rising proportion of black unmarried mothers in the program. In states such as Delaware, where public assistance lagged behind the national average during the 1950s, voluntary agencies such as the Family Society found themselves continually drawn back into meeting the needs of clients underserved or excluded from public assistance. Their engagement with public

welfare policy demonstrated their concern about adequate welfare policy on both institutional and humanitarian grounds, but their engagement of politics on its behalf demonstrated a lack of will, a lack of political strength, or both. Their efforts in Delaware politics mirrored the efforts of the FSAA at a national level: a professed desire to engage, and some meaningful activity on behalf of a number of individuals, but an organization too cautious and hamstrung to be an effective political force. Even within the field of social welfare, where few organized interest groups operated, the FSAA's voice was tepid—much to the frustration of activists such as Sidney Hollander and Elizabeth Wickenden.

On the surface, the sleeker modern family service agencies of the 1950s, with their vestigial charity activities quickly atrophying, seemed appropriate for an era when poverty was supposedly on the wane. But the ability of family agencies to pass from welfare to charity was continually hampered by the travails of public assistance. When welfare reform emerged in the early 1960s as a political priority, and with mounting evidence of the limitations of social work to achieve meaningful social change, the alignment of public and private social welfare would be twisted in a way that would end the tacit postwar consensus.

CHAPTER SEVEN: VOLUNTARISM IN THE SIXTIES

Introduction

Social work was under the gun in the early 1960s. One of the people pointing that gun was Richard Cloward. Cloward, himself a product of the Columbia University School of Social Work and a professor there, had become increasingly convinced in the late 1950s that social welfare institutions, and the people who staffed them, were barriers, rather than aides, to the progress of poor people. Cloward and his collaborator Lloyd Ohlin in 1959 had built their efforts to re-orient social services to better serve the poor in their experimental juvenile delinquency program in New York City, Mobilization for Youth. When President Kennedy's Commission on Juvenile Delinquency tapped Ohlin and the MFY model for a national program in 1962, the same conviction that the social welfare system was fundamentally flawed and in dire need of restructuring, went with the Columbia activists. The delinquency planners who were drawn into the planning of the War on Poverty in the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination carried this suspicion of established social agencies with them.⁷²⁰

In 1963, Cloward took time to set down his thoughts on one specific element of the social welfare establishment: private social agencies. While the category encompassed a wide variety of non-profit, voluntary sector institutions, Cloward had a particular set in mind — family service agencies and mental health clinics that employed psychiatric social workers. In a paper that drew on a recent statistical survey of clientele the member agencies of the Family Service Association of America, Cloward laid out what he perceived as “a general disengagement from the poor” by these agencies whose

⁷²⁰ Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 109-119, 244-245.

origins had been in serving the impoverished. He described the gradual shift away from dispensing material relief to giving “service,” usually in the form of contact and interviews with a social caseworker. That change in function had changed the clientele, with family service agencies serving, by 1960, a group with an income distribution nearly matching that of America as a whole, and slightly better educated than average, away from a poorer and less educated clientele of the 1930s and before. An ideology of “egalitarianism” and service to all levels of society had replaced an early focus of family agencies, and social work in general, with the poor.⁷²¹

Cloward isolated three reasons why private family agencies had distanced themselves from the poor since the 1930s. Professionalism was first; the status of the worker was intimately related to the status of the client, he argued, and social workers, constantly struggling for professional status, sought out middle class clients in order to reinforce their own middle-class identity. Second, the division of labor between public welfare and private social agencies established in the 1930s, with public institutions assuming responsibility for the basic social safety net, had been taken by private institutions as an excuse to get out of providing material benefits and to refer poorer clients in need of financial assistance to public institutions. Finally, the cultural gap between lower class clients and middle class social workers seemed to be so great that agencies turned away poorer clients more frequently than others, even if they had

⁷²¹ Richard Cloward, “Social Class and Private Social Agencies,” *Education for Social Work: Proceedings of the Annual Program of the Council on Social Work Education, 1963* (New York: Council of Social Work Education, 1963): 128. Cloward revised and expanded the paper with Irwin Epstein, presenting it as “Private Welfare’s Disengagement from the Poor: The Case of Family Adjustment Agencies” at the SUNY-Buffalo School of Social Welfare in May 1965. It was subsequently published in George Brager and Francis Purcell, *Community Action Against Poverty* (New Haven, CT: College and University Press, 1967).

problems other than financial assistance. Where private agencies had once offered a mix of relief and advice, now, by focusing their services on an intangible “talking process,” they had distanced themselves from the concrete needs of the poor.⁷²²

Family service agencies received a more sympathetic, but equally troubling, response from a different set of policy activists in the early 1960s. Several board members of the Family Service Association of America attended the annual meeting of the National Association of Mental Health in 1962 to discuss relationships between family service agencies and the mental health field, particularly the mental health clinics shaping up to be a major part of President Kennedy’s proposed mental health legislation. Given the heavy investment of many family agencies in counseling skills, their reliance on psychiatric consulting, and their history of working within therapeutic networks, most agencies saw themselves as having a clear tie to the mental health field. Reporting back to the board, they said that the attitude of the NAMH was that “where they exist, family services are fine services,” but were only in reach of about half of the population, whereas an expanded system of publicly funded mental health clinics could offer mental health resources to a much wider range of people. Ralph Ormsby, director of the Family Service of Philadelphia, had warned of this possibility in the late 1950s. Viewing with alarm the spread of mental hygiene and child guidance clinics supported by public funds, he complained, “these clinics were interpreting their services as ‘family centered’ while at the same time family agencies were commonly denied use of these funds.” Family agencies needed to either present themselves clearly as mental health resources, or clarify

⁷²² Ibid, p. 128-134.

themselves as a distinctive resource for families that would distinguish themselves from their more broadly funded competitors.⁷²³

Both the War on Poverty and the community mental health movement, as historian Gerald Grob has observed, emphasized the “empowerment of individuals and small groups,” and drew on a “growing anti-institutionalist sentiment” that condemned “arbitrary bureaucratic organizations.”⁷²⁴ One of the primary embodiments of that outlook in both cases was a strategy of piping federal resources directly into local communities, bypassing established institutions such as state mental health hospitals and public welfare agencies. While large public institutions were the primary targets of both movements, they also unleashed new federal money and a multitude of new nonprofit organizations into fields partially claimed by private family service agencies. While family agencies had played a role in legitimizing the types of social services both community mental health agencies and community action agencies would ultimately dispense, FSAA agencies and social workers did not serve as a template for state expansion in the 1960s, as they had during the Depression. Instead, community mental health and community action chose different models—mental hygiene clinics and psychiatry, in the case of the former, and community organization and client empowerment in the latter. Without directly displacing family service, the federal government dramatically increased the number of institutions in an increasingly amorphous “nonprofit sector” that cut deeply into the voluntary sector’s traditional areas of service.

⁷²³ Board of Directors Minutes, Family Service Association of America, May 10-11, 1962, Folder 4, Box 5; Ad Hoc Meeting on Research, FSAA, Jan. 20, 1959, Folder 27, Box 22.

⁷²⁴ Gerald Grob, *From Asylum to Community: Mental Health Policy in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 241.

This chapter will explore how voluntary family service agencies met these challenges by moving closer to, rather than further from, publicly funded programs. The explosion of federally financed, community based organizations in the 1960s provided the engine for a fundamental shift in the family agency movement toward using public funds to carry out their “voluntary” programs. The melding of the old private welfare establishment into a new nonprofit sector marked the end of a tacit public-private divide in social welfare that had held since the New Deal. While the “New Alignments” proclaimed by Linton Swift in 1934 were often more aspiration than reality, it embodied the belief that social responsibility could be relatively neatly divided along administrative lines. In the 1960s, an ideology of decentralization and client empowerment coupled with the pragmatism of rapidly expanding institutions eroded the commitment to relatively separate spheres of public and private social welfare.

For some within family service agencies, the War on Poverty offered the chance to rebut Cloward, re-engage with the poor, and demonstrate that the voluntary sector was still relevant. Their most high-profile effort was Project ENABLE, a project promoted to local Community Action Agencies through the national Office of Economic Opportunity. This effort, a joint project of the Family Service Association of America, the Urban League, and the Child Study Association of America aimed to combine the social work manpower of the first, the connections to minority communities of the second, and the parent education expertise of the third into a tool to help parents in poor communities address problems in their families and their neighborhoods. This chapter will explore the brief and troubled history of Project ENABLE, and use it as a tool to answer the question

of how the most “establishment” of the social welfare establishment responded to the intellectual and institutional challenges of the War on Poverty.

Viewing the War on Poverty, and Community Action in particular through the perspective of established social agencies will highlight one of the War’s less-discussed objectives: the reorientation of the social service sector. Most of the contemporary controversy surrounding the program focused on its most radical proponents, particularly the notion of empowering poor people. Community action’s own intellectual and institutional limits as an anti-poverty device have been explored in great detail elsewhere. Its creation of institutional bases for including a portion of the poor in the political and administrative life of some cities, though, has been recognized as a tangible accomplishment of the program, even if it did not unfold along the lines envisioned by its framers.⁷²⁵ This chapter will stress another perspective, that of moderate proponents of the poverty program who hoped to shake up established agencies to force them to serve the poor more effectively and humanely. Private welfare’s experience with the War suggests that, as with poor people, attempts to rehabilitate agencies more often than not met with frustration.

⁷²⁵ Standard works on the limits of the War on Poverty are Patrick Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1969); Henry Aaron, *Politics and the Professors: The Great Society in Perspective* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1978), and Matusow. Recent explorations of the impact of the Great Society on local politics include Kent Germany, “Making a New Louisiana: American Liberalism and the Search for the Great Society in New Orleans, 1964—1974” (Ph.D., Tulane University, 2000); William Clayson, “‘The Barrios and the Ghettos Have Organized!’ Community Action, Political Acrimony and the War on Poverty in San Antonio,” *Journal of Urban History* (Jan. 2002): 158-183; Lisa Hazirjian, “From Intimidation to Mobilization: The Impact of Neighborhood Organizing among Working Class African Americans in Rocky Mount, North Carolina,” presented at the Southern Historical Association annual meeting, Fort Worth, TX, Nov. 1999.

Limits of Voluntary Fundraising

As in the early 1930s, private family agencies faced a dilemma in financing in the early 1960s. Though not driven by the stark need of the Depression, there was a strong sense among national leadership and agencies executives that their institutional prospects were stagnating. Private family service agencies depended almost exclusively on money raised by "federated financing," that is, what were known by the early 1960s as United Funds, the predecessor to the United Way. Of the nine largest US metropolitan areas, excluding New York, family service agencies received anywhere from 65 percent to 94 percent of their funding from United Funds. The percentages in smaller cities with fewer endowed funds were probably higher.⁷²⁶ In the early 1960s, despite steady growth in the amount raised by federated financing, family agencies were feeling shortchanged and constrained by those funds. Competition within local funds from health-related fundraising, such as the American Heart Association, had eroded the leading position family agencies had once enjoyed in local fundraising; the number of national and regional voluntary organizations raising money on the local level had increased from 15 in 1940 to over 100 in 1960. And while fundraising had grown, its growth was relatively slow, and many agencies felt themselves "in a financial squeeze" as they tried to maintain salary levels in order to attract and keep professional workers.⁷²⁷ Non-profit agencies that

⁷²⁶ Agencies in the New York-New Jersey area as a whole received 33 percent from United Funds, 33 percent from investments, 13 percent from independent financing, and 7 percent from public. This high percentage of income from investment was atypical of FSAA agencies; most did not enjoy the endowments of the New York-New Jersey region.

⁷²⁷ Executives' Conference, May 8-10, 1958, Folder 20, Box 7, FSAA; "Selected Data on the General Population and on FSAA Member Agencies in the Ten Most Populous Standard Metropolitan Areas in the United States," Jan. 1960, Folder 12, Box 33, FSAA; FSAA Directors, May 11-12, 1961. According to the United Community Funds and Councils of America, federated fundraising had grown slightly faster than disposable personal income (from which charitable contributions would presumably be drawn) from 1945 to 1961, see UCFCA, *Trends in Giving, 1962* (New York: UCFCA, 1962), p. 2; Scott M. Cutlip, *Fund*

participated in federated funds were prohibited from conducting independent fund drives. In order to grow, or to create new programs, private agencies could look primarily to three outside sources: foundation grants, fee income from clients, or public funds.

Of these three, fees and public funds attracted the most attention from agencies. Fees for service, initiated postwar, had been less a fundraising mechanism than a tool to help distinguish family service from "charity." It had spread rapidly during the 1950s. Only 26 percent of FSAA member agencies charged fees in 1950, while by 1963, 96 percent did. They remained more of a symbolic gesture than a revenue stream. At the Family Service of Northern Delaware, which had started using a sliding fee scale in 1952, the number of families charged fees had gone from seven to 184 in 1964, and revenue had increased from \$75 to \$2273. This latter figure, though, constituted only two percent of the agency's income in 1964. But the United Community Fund in Wilmington was leaning on FSND to charge fees more aggressively. Other UCF agencies, such as YMCAs, garnered a higher percentage of their support from fees, and the voluntary fundraisers urged family agencies to try to broaden their base of support.⁷²⁸

Though many voluntary agencies on the local level, particularly children's institutions, had depended on a mix of voluntary and public funds for much of their history, family agencies had largely divorced themselves from public subsidy in the 1930s. In the early 1960s though, both the national FSAA and numerous local organizations were experimenting with obtaining public funds. The national organization reached out to the National Institute of Mental Health and the Department of Health,

Raising in the United States: Its Role in America's Philanthropy (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965), p. 488.

⁷²⁸ Sally Bennett, "A Study of the Potential for Increased Agency Income from Counseling Fees," (MSW, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, 1966). p. 6.

Education, and Welfare, for information on obtaining research and demonstration grants from the two agencies in the early 1960s, and obtained a small NIMH grant for research on basic processes of marital counseling. 40 percent of 42 agencies in Western region surveyed in 1962 said they had applied for federal or private funds for new programs.⁷²⁹ By 1963, the national board was running an Ad Hoc Committee on the Use of Public Funds to try to lay out policy guidelines for local agencies.

Some family agencies had already had a taste of public money through limited “purchase of service” arrangements with local public welfare. Some were lingering commitments from pre-Depression programs; in the 1950s, a survey of family agencies revealed that 20 percent received public funds. The numbers had been declining since 1935, though, and half of those agencies received less than 10 percent of their total budget from those funds. Those agencies that combined a family service with an adoption, foster care, or child protection program were more likely to receive public funds from local child welfare funds. But during the 1950s, some family agencies began supplying other services to other social agencies, both public and private. Some of this was built on the experience in the late 1940s and early 1950s of lending out caseworkers as part of a demonstration of casework’s value. In the 1950s, though, the pattern shifted toward subcontracting of “concrete” services. The most prevalent was providing “homemaker” service to clients of other agencies. Homemakers were women employed by the family agency who would take over household duties of a family—cooking, cleaning, and watching over children—usually when the mother was temporarily

⁷²⁹ James Turrentine, “A Historical Perspective,” in “Family Service for a Changing World”; Clark Blackburn to Member Agencies, Oct. 26, 1961, Folder FSAA Biennial 1960, Box 3; Stanley Davies, Memorandum, May 11, 1961, Folder 27, Box 22, FSAA

incapacitated, most often from a hospital visit or in anticipation of a baby. By 1957, roughly a third of FSAA members offered this service to their clients. Other local social agencies were interested in using homemakers but, if they were small, could not afford to keep them on staff. For public agencies, it was easier to use discretionary funds in order to obtain these services rather than seek appropriations for an entirely new program under public auspices. In St. Paul, Family Service was providing homemaker service under contract to the Ramsey County Welfare Board, Jewish Family Service, and the Bureau of Catholic Charities, and their fees represented 9.2 percent of the agency's 1954 revenues.⁷³⁰

As more and more family agencies warmed to the idea of accepting public funds in the early 1960s, the experience with homemaker service might have sent warning signals. It quickly became the tail that wagged the dog for Family Service of St. Paul. Keeping salaried homemakers on staff was expensive, and required substantial administrative resources to plan for their most efficient use. The St. Paul agency had hoped that selling homemaker service would help subsidize its provision to its own clients. However, in the mid-1950s, the service was proving so expensive that they had to cut homemaker use by Family Service clients in order to sustain their purchase of service commitments. Fluctuating demands by outside clients was one of the primary problems; the agency had to keep homemakers on staff even in periods when other agencies were not buying. This underscored the lesson of the Depression: concrete services were

⁷³⁰ "Support of Member Agencies in 1949," *Highlights* (Nov. 1950), p. 129-131; Board of Directors, Family Service of St. Paul, Dec. 5, 1954, Box 2; "The 1956 Budget Request," July 1955, in Folder "Board of Directors 1955," Box 2 Family Service of St. Paul Records, SWHA; *Annual Report, 1954*, Family Service of St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society; "Highlights of Recent FSAA Statistics," Jan. 1959, Folder 12, Box 33, FSAA.

expensive and could seriously disrupt the agency. St. Paul looked to expanding its purchase of service in order to stabilize the program. In 1961, the local public health department had received funding from the U.S. Public Health Service to try to reduce the number of chronic cases in local hospitals by transferring them to home care. The public health department hoped to purchase homemaker service as one element of this program, as they were in too much of a hurry to establish their own homemaker department. Other agencies, though, sought to transfer homemaker service entirely to the public sector. Nashville Family and Children's Service, facing a budget deficit in 1960, cut back its support for homemaker service and urged the creation of a publicly supported program. Clark Blackburn, the director of the national FSAA, told a meeting of agency leaders that homemaker service was a good example of the "demonstration" function of voluntary agencies: having shown the value of the service, they should push for public agencies to assume responsibility for it.⁷³¹

Using public funds was one step toward the erosion of the philosophical basis of the "New Alignments" between public and private that had been laid out in the 1930s. Though never observed religiously by family agencies, it had encapsulated a consensus among liberal social welfare leaders in the 1930s that discouraged public funds flowing to private agencies.⁷³² By and large, the anti-subsidy position was that public funding of private institutions discouraged the establishment of adequate public facilities. Harry

⁷³¹ "The 1956 Budget Request," Directors, FSSP, Apr. 3, 1961, Dec. 4, 1961, Box 2, FSSP; Moynihan, p. 48-49; FSAA Executives' Conference, May 8-10, 1958, Folder 20, Box 7, FSAA. Family Service of Northern Delaware also used the Delaware Hospital Home Care program to support its homemaker service in the early 1960s. See Board of Directors, Family Service of Northern Delaware, Mar. 15, 1960, Children and Families First Library, Wilmington, DE.

⁷³² Linton Swift, *New Alignments Between Public and Private Agencies in a Community Family Welfare and Relief Program* (New York: Family Welfare Association of America, 1934); Josephine Brown, *Public Welfare, 1929-1939* (New York: Henry Holt, 1940), p. 413-419.

Hopkins had made this his first edict in establishing the rules for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. This was in large part drawn from the examples of child welfare institutions, largely sectarian and primarily Catholic, in large cities that received copious amounts of public money, especially in Chicago and New York, and where public child care facilities had remained underdeveloped. Public welfare proponents fought running battles with Catholic leaders from the enactment of the child welfare provisions of the Social Security Act onward over the role that private organizations would play in child care. Catholic organizations supported subsidy as an element of the idea of "subsidiarity" in Catholic social thought, which held that the institutions closest to the people in need should provide services, even if the money flowed from more distant sources. Catholic political clout kept federal money out of urban children's services through the 1950s, and dominated local child-care institutions in several cities, notably New York, through the 1960s. Jewish organizations tended to be more generally supportive of public institutions than Catholics did, in education and in welfare. However, in specific instances, and particularly where there were brick and mortar investments such as in homes for children and for the elderly, Jewish organizations were also willing to experiment with purchase of service and even accept non-Jewish residents in order to sustain an institution under Jewish auspices. In Minneapolis, the Jewish-run Oak Park home accepted children from the Hennepin County Welfare Board in order to support an institution with a dwindling number of

Jewish children, a practice the Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis disapproved of.⁷³³

In the late 1950s, purchase of service was urged by some as a strategy for dealing with public welfare's failures. In New York, Mayor Robert Wagner convened a blue ribbon panel in 1958 to review the Department of Welfare in the wake of a grand jury investigation of alleged welfare fraud and abuse. The seven-member panel, consisting entirely of representatives of local nonprofit agencies, recommended a more aggressive use of purchase of service from voluntary agencies, in particular, the casework services that might be useful to help stabilize welfare families. Given New York's heavy reliance on sectarian child care institutions, the recommendation was unsurprising. Reflecting the concerns of the four representatives of sectarian agencies, the report urged greater support for public services but only when it was "ascertained that voluntary effort is unequal to the task and is unable to perform it with assistance from the government." One unnamed dissenter, almost certainly Frank Hertel, the former general director of the FSAA and a consistent supporter of developing public institutions, argued that the report's tone was too negative toward public institutions and argued for broader government responsibility, including counseling. The committee report elicited a protest from the New York chapter of the National Association of Social Workers that said that

⁷³³ Dorothy Brown and Elizabeth McKeown, *The Poor Belong to Us: Catholic Charities and American Welfare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 155-156, 194; Steiner, p. 12-14; Marc Dollinger, *Quest for Inclusion: Jews and Liberalism in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 152; Callman Rawley to Rabbi Bernard Walfish, [Jan, 1953], JFCS Correspondence, 1950-53, Box 1; Robert Borg to Edeard Brooks [n.d.], JFCS Correspondence, 1957-63, Box 1, Jewish Family and Children's Society of Minneapolis Papers, Minnesota Historical Society. For a detailed examination of legal challenges to public subsidy of sectarian child care institutions in New York in the 1970s, see Nina Bernstein, *The Lost Children of Wilder: The Epic Struggle to Change Foster Care* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001).

the purchase of service proposals went against the grain of the New Deal's assumption of primary public responsibility in social welfare.⁷³⁴

FSAA members had generally supported the anti-subsidy position, particularly large city agencies that criticized the pattern of subsidized sectarian child-care institutions. However, in the early 1960s, many agencies were looking with more interest at the public purse. United Fund limitations were one reason. Anthony DeMarinis, director of Family and Children's Service of St. Louis told fellow agency executives in 1958 that "I think the position we have taken in regard to public monies is going to have to change." Smaller agencies in particular were reported to be "desperately struggling for funds" and more likely to embrace public financing. The national board of the FSAA began to soften its position on public funding. While making clear that "public money should not be sought at the expense of public agency," using government funds to set up new projects seemed acceptable.⁷³⁵

Public policy in the early 1960s put these discussions of purchase of service, usually locally negotiated, onto the national stage. One focal point came during discussion of the Kennedy Administration's welfare reform proposals during 1962. The Public Welfare Amendments, as they would come to be known, were the culmination of

⁷³⁴ The committee was chaired by the head of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, and included the heads of the Catholic Charities of the Dioceses of Brooklyn and New York, the Brooklyn Bureau of Social Service, the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, the Community Council of Greater New York, and Hertel, now executive director of the Community Service Society. A. Bernice Quimby, the Protestant representative, had been the director of Delaware's State Department of Welfare in the 1940s and had resigned to protest the legislature's meager funding of public welfare. "Mayor Names 7-Man Unit to Sift Welfare Activities," *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1958, p. 1; "Revisions Urged in Public Welfare," *NYT*, Oct. 17, 1959, p. 25; Mayor's Committee of Inquiry, *Report of the Mayor's Committee on the New York City Department of Welfare* (New York, 1959), p. 1-4; New York NASW, "Statement on the Report of the Mayor's Committee of Inquiry on the New York City Department of Welfare," Feb. 1960, "Public Welfare -- position statements," Box 54, National Social Welfare Assembly Records, Supplement 2.

⁷³⁵ FSAA Ad Hoc Committee on Use of Public Funds, "Report," Apr. 28, 1964, Folder 5, Box 5; FSAA Executives' Conference, May 8-10, 1958; FSAA Committee on Public Issues Minutes, Apr. 16, 1963, Folder 1, Box 14; FSAA Directors, Nov. 29-30, 1962, FSAA.

several years of efforts by public and voluntary sector welfare activists to apply the expertise of social casework to public welfare administration, particularly in the Aid to Dependent Children program. Since the early 1950s, a number of demonstration projects at the local level had experimented with increasing the social service component of public welfare in an effort to "rehabilitate" clients and wean them away from what was perceived as increasingly chronic welfare dependency. Several projects directed or inspired by Community Research Associates, including the St. Paul Family Centered Project, were critical studies that gained national attention and seemed to promise that intensive casework with welfare families could indeed give them the stability and support that they seemed to need to become self-supporting. ADC, once a program specifically aimed at keeping mothers at home with children, and one that was envisioned as serving mostly white clients, had rising proportions of minority families, often with children born out of wedlock. The shifting population of ADC, and increasing faith in the efficacy of the types of casework done by private agencies, built confidence in the possibilities of applying it to welfare caseloads. Dozens of small projects emulated the national demonstrations, where professional caseworkers in public welfare took on reduced caseloads in order to work more closely with each family.

Mounting controversy over federally supported welfare programs brought the need for reform closer to the top of federal administrator's agendas. Federal public policy had been gradually acknowledging the potential of "services," though the concept remained ill defined, in solving the perceived problems of welfare. In 1956, the public assistance titles of the Social Security Act were amended to fund the provision of social services aimed at strengthening family life and rehabilitating recipients of public

assistance back to self-sufficiency, though states made little use of the 50-50 matching formula for service activity. Nonetheless, the stress on service by federal administrators increased in the early 1960s. When Wilbur Cohen, a veteran Social Security policy expert, was tapped at Kennedy's assistant Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in early 1961, to assist Secretary Abraham Ribicoff, one of his primary tasks was to undertake the first serious attempt at welfare reform since the passage of Social Security in 1935. A series of nationally publicized incidents surrounding welfare had increased the political visibility of welfare in the early 1960s. In 1960, the state of Louisiana had cut thousands of families, nearly all African American, from ADC rolls, claiming violation of the "suitable home" provisions that prohibited ADC in Louisiana to families with an illegitimate child. Though most of the families were reinstated after the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare threatened to withhold funds, Louisiana's law was one signal that the intertwining of race and welfare was becoming more explosive. The second incident was in 1961 in Newburgh, New York, a small declining industrial city, where a Republican city manager decided to implement a work requirement for all welfare recipients. "The Battle of Newburgh," as it was subsequently called, encapsulated the growing popular resentment of welfare recipients deemed to be lazy, immoral, or both.⁷³⁶ Cognizant of the increasing vulnerability of public assistance, welfare administrators hoped that a stress on services that could encourage self-sufficiency by welfare recipients could address the criticism of the program.

Cohen and Ribicoff convened an ad hoc committee to produce a report on welfare reform. Dominated by social work leaders, and including the heads of prominent

⁷³⁶ Berkowitz, *America's Welfare State*, p. 100-106; Bell, 137-151; Mittelstadt, ch. 4.

voluntary agencies, including Clark Blackburn of the FSAA, it produced a report tailored to the desires of Cohen—that rehabilitation by means of social services be made the centerpiece of ADC, rather than the program’s original intent of keeping mothers home with their children. The administration’s proposed bill to Congress made the rehabilitation recommendations the centerpiece of its proposal. Sidney Hollander reported to the FSAA board “in almost all respects, the recommendations of the voluntary agencies, including the Family Service Association of America, showed themselves in the bill that Secretary Ribicoff endorsed.” FSAA general director Clark Blackburn, with support from the Board, wrote a letter of support for the bill to the House Ways and Means Committee, and testified in person at the Senate Finance Committee Hearings several months later.⁷³⁷

Given the intense debate twenty years earlier during World War Two between advocates of public welfare casework and critics from the voluntary sector, the assembly of voluntary agencies on the Ad Hoc Committee and in support of the 1962 Amendments was striking. It is particularly significant, since the Amendments authorized services not only for current welfare recipients but also for those who “have been or are likely to become applicants for or recipients of assistance.” It was a testament the voluntary sector’s relative security about the inability of public welfare to significantly challenge its

⁷³⁷ Mittelstadt, p. 230-231; Berkowitz, *America’s Welfare State*, p. 107-111. Directors, FSAA, May 11, 1962, Folder 3, Box 5, FSAA. U.S. Senate, Committee on Finance. *Public Assistance Act of 1962* 87th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 284-289. One critic of private social agencies claimed that the FSAA had not even bothered to show up at the hearings on the 1962 Amendments. In fairness to people like Blackburn, who felt that the organization should take a strong stance on social policy, it should be noted that the FSAA rushed to get a letter of support in to the House hearings and did in fact testify in person at the Senate hearings. See Gil Steiner, *Social Insecurity: The Politics of Welfare* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), p. 11-12; “Report of Public Issues Committee for FSAA Board Meeting, May 11, 1962,” Folder 3, Box 5, FSAA. Steiner’s characterization, though, held true for many FSAA member agencies.

professional dominance of casework. The experience of the ensuing decades had shown family agencies that the market for their counseling services was expansive. Their waiting lists were overflowing with clients, most of whom were not drawn from the welfare rolls. Those agencies that had dealt with "multi-problem" families on welfare knew how time consuming such work was. Augmenting the social service aspects of welfare, if effective in making clients independent, might reduce the pressure some agencies felt from serving welfare clients, and shift the burden onto public institutions. And the proposed amendments, by financing social work education more broadly, would expand the pool of professional caseworkers, easing the nearly permanent crisis of staff shortages in the voluntary sector. Finally, they hoped that greater professionalism in public welfare would diminish problems of fraud and lax administration that helped give rise to criticism of welfare and shore up the political fortunes of the program. Executives from big-city FSAA members agreed that the 1962 Amendments were salutary, and that there was room for both private and public family counseling. And an executive of the small FSAA agency in Port Arthur, Texas, wrote "I would hope FSAA would do all possible to help the public agency get good trained staff and encourage that they provide the basic casework service to families...."⁷³⁸

There was one further carrot for the voluntary sector in the proposed 1962 bill: a provision allowing for purchase of service, including casework, from voluntary organizations. In testimony to Congress, the FSAA allowed that it was worth experimenting with purchase of service, as long as it was not used to undercut public

⁷³⁸ Conference of Larger Agency Executives, FSAA, April 13, 1962, Folder 21, Box 7, FSAA; Emma Joe Hill (Family Counseling Service of Port Arthur) to Lena Cochran, July 5, 1962, Folder 2, Box 41, FSAA Supplement. Charles Gilbert, "Policy-Making in Public Welfare: The 1962 Amendments," *Political Science Quarterly* (June 1966): 196-224.

welfare development, and noted that the FSAA required its member agencies to receive the bulk of their financing from private sources. Joseph Reid of the Child Welfare Association of America, representing voluntary sector child care agencies, acknowledged the pressures from United Funds to seek outside sources of funding, and thought that purchase of service might alleviate this pressure. He supported the provision but asked for limits, noting that in certain parts of the country (most likely, church-supported child welfare institutions) purchase of service had led to "large quasi-public social agencies," he urged that the House approve limits on funding. Surprisingly, Norman Lourie of the National Association of Social Workers also endorsed limited purchase of service, despite the NASW chapter's protest of the proposal in New York two years earlier. The representatives of the Catholic Church, while supporting purchase of service, emphasized the need for limits. Raymond Gallagher of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, while defending the church's prerogatives in child welfare, advocated a "middle of the road path" in family services, where government money did not overwhelm private agencies. Outright opposition came from representatives of vocational rehabilitation agencies, who feared that purchase of service from voluntary agencies would allow public assistance agencies to build competing vocational rehabilitation units. With active opposition from the vocational rehabilitation sector, only cautious support from the voluntary sector, and vocal protests from Republican congressman Bruce Alger of Texas who worried that such provisions would be "putting the church under the Government," the Ways and Means Committee deleted the provision. Nonetheless, the debate signaled

an emerging consensus among voluntary agencies that the public-private line was not so inviolable as to prevent public funds from flowing to them.⁷³⁹

Community Mental Health

While innovations in public welfare policy no longer seemed to threaten family agencies, a burgeoning federal commitment to mental health reform was a more proximate challenge. The National Institute of Mental Health, created by the Mental Health Act of 1946, under the direction of Robert Felix, had been conducting a slow campaign during the late 1940s and 1950s to construct community based mental health facilities that could serve as centers for early diagnosis and treatment, to prevent worsening of mental illness and forestall institutionalization. Felix, much like social work innovators such as Bradley Buell, saw his field through a public health lens that lent itself to an emphasis on prevention and control. Lying behind Felix's campaign was the hope that the federal government could take leadership in mental health care away from the states, whose administration of state mental hospitals was coming under increased fire. The NIMH's mandate for research, training, and stimulation of preventative psychiatry were all aimed at broadening the institutional reach of mental health treatment away from what was seen as largely custodial care in state hospitals. The NIMH's funding for clinics was small and grew slowly during the 1950s, assisting 342 clinics in 1951. But its stimulation of state-level planning had a ripple effect beyond programs it funded directly,

⁷³⁹ Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives. *Public Welfare Amendments of 1962* 87th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1962), p. 431, 471, 577, 588-591, 631-633. Gilbert, p. 212; Martha Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending for Social Services Grants* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1975), p. 10.

and by the mid-1950s, there were roughly 1300 outpatient psychiatric clinics, over half of which were publicly funded.⁷⁴⁰

This was a development that family agencies kept their eyes on. Many of these clinics were focused on the seriously mentally ill. But with the orientation of the NIMH to providing a continuum of mental health services, including to people who were not candidates for institutionalization, psychiatric clinics began taking on the functions of general-service mental health agencies. In the late 1940s in most communities, the psychiatric resources that psychiatric clinics brought in were often eagerly welcomed by family agencies. As show in Chapter Four, these agencies often were linked into therapeutic networks that shared a broad orientation toward promoting expert therapeutic solutions, whether psychiatric, psychological, or social work-based to other local agencies and to the public at large. Nonetheless, family agencies sensed that the expansive philosophy of the community clinic movement might overlap with their own functions. In 1949, some agencies were already noticing that some community clinics “seemed to parallel closely the typical services of family agencies.” By the mid-1950s, it had become clear that there were essential similarities between casework counseling and short-term psychotherapy. As shown in Chapter Six, most social workers had accepted a rough division of labor between casework and psychiatry, with caseworkers steering clear of the most intense, psychoanalytic techniques. In day-to-day practice, and particularly in comparison to community based clinics rather than private practice psychotherapy, there remained a wide common ground. Articles that attempted to delineate the difference of functions of family service and mental hygiene clinics in the 1950s usually concluded

⁷⁴⁰ Grob, p. 54-59.

that there was a fundamental overlap in their mission. Social workers occasionally complained that psychiatric clinics relied more heavily on their social workers than on the limited time of their psychiatrists, blurring the boundaries further.⁷⁴¹

The expansion of clinic-based psychiatry supported by the states in the 1950s indicated a growing interest in mental health issues. With enormous investments in mental hospitals, states were quite interested in solutions that offered potential fiscal relief. Community psychiatry also played to liberal hopes of more humane treatment for the mentally ill, and an embrace of the promises of the therapeutic establishment to be able to prevent serious mental illness. Congress reflected this concern, commissioning a major report published in 1960, *Action for Mental Health*, that called for a broad range of reforms to improve the treatment of mental illness, including expanded community-based care. Kennedy's election raised hopes among mental health advocates that a more activist federal government would move to implement the recommendations of the report, and indeed, Kennedy convened yet another task force to generate recommendations for mental health policy. The ever-enterprising Felix of NIMH took charge of this committee and steered it toward an emphasis on community based mental health, with the explicit promise that it would help reduce the need for state mental hospitals.⁷⁴²

The passage of the Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act of 1963, which embraced the Kennedy Administration's proposals, was emblematic of the activist, reformist sentiment that pervaded both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. It was

⁷⁴¹ Mary Reeve and Lorna Brangwin, "Family Service Agencies and Mental Hygiene Clinics," *Social Casework* (May 1952): 193-197; Lucille Austin, "Relationships Between Family Agencies and Mental Health Clinics," *Social Casework* (Feb. 1955): 51-59; Judd Marmor, "Indications for Psychiatric Therapy or Social Casework," *Social Casework* (Feb. 1955): 60-63; New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies, *Cooperation Toward Mental Health* (Trenton, NJ, 1962), p. 28.

⁷⁴² Grob, p. 224.

also representative of a widespread sentiment toward decentralization. For many supporters of the act, the hope was that treatment in decentralized, community based clinics would prove more effective and humane than that in large hospitals, and that building clinics would result in a decrease in hospital population. As the centers began to be planned, built and put into operation, though, it became clear that treatment of the seriously mentally ill was not going to be a priority. Rather, clinics would converge on offering individual psychotherapy as their primary tool. Such an approach oriented the clinics away from severe illness and toward treating mild neuroses, relationship problems, and so on. The freedom and flexibility given centers allowed them to avoid serious cases and respond to local pressures for more generalized services to broader populations.⁷⁴³

Family agencies realized they were facing a serious problem, even prior to the 1963 legislation. Arthur Kruse, director of the Family Service Association of Cleveland, warned in 1958 that in light of the development of the “whole mental health field” that family agencies had to define themselves clearly as a counseling service rather than “a department store serving the family,” or else their communities would set up a competing counseling organization. A conference of agency directors in the mid-Atlantic region agreed in 1960 that they needed to redefine their function in light of the rise of mental health clinics, and the subject was discussed at the 1961 biennial meeting of the FSAA. Family agencies in New Jersey, with the help of a state legislator who was a board member of a local agency, convened a three-day workshop in 1962 with state mental health officials to try to delineate the respective roles that family service and mental

⁷⁴³ Ibid, p. 241, 252-253.

health agencies should play. Again, the conferees noted wide areas of overlap, with one discussant observing that after several days, it was hard to tell the family service and mental health representatives apart.⁷⁴⁴

Several studies done in the wake of the passage of the Community Mental Health Act confirmed the basic similarities. Basic treatment modalities were quite similar. Case records from highly psychiatric family agencies were virtually indistinguishable from psychiatric clinics. 26 out of 31 metropolitan Chicago family agencies reported that they conducted “intensive case therapy” in 1965. In general, the type of therapy did tend to divide down the lines established in the 1950s, with clinics tending toward more psychoanalytic approaches, and family agencies tending to use less-intensive ego-supportive and cathartic techniques. A comparison of a clinic and family service agency in Maryland conducted by the NIMH found “striking similarities” in the clientele, and found that the family service agency and the clinic gave clients roughly the same number of interviews, indicating a similar intensity in treatment. A later study in Illinois found that clinics tended to serve clients for a longer time period, though the longer delays in being seen at a clinic may have obscured similar numbers of interviews.⁷⁴⁵

But several key differences did emerge from these studies. They detail the fragmentation of the “therapeutic networks” of the immediate postwar era. Psychiatric agencies operated within a medical environment with access to prescription drugs that were slowly becoming more important in psychiatric treatment. Family agencies, on the other hand, rooted in social work, still tended to be more conscious of the impact of the

⁷⁴⁴ FSAA Mid-Atlantic Region Executives’ Workshop, May 5, 1960; “Function 1958-1960,” Box 31; Directors, May 11-12, 1961, Folder 3, Box 5, FSAA; *Cooperation Toward Mental Health*, p. 63.

⁷⁴⁵ *Cooperation Toward Mental Health*, p. 28-36; Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, *Survey of Child Care and Family Service Agencies in Chicago Metropolitan Area* (Chicago, 1966), p. 10; Hill, p. 35.

external environment, and drew on community resources more frequently.⁷⁴⁶ Public perceptions delineated further differences: family agencies seemed to enjoy a more favorable image with the general public than psychiatric clinics. Psychiatric clinics were associated with serious mental illness, and clients choosing an agency to visit on their own volition tended to prefer family agencies to avoid this stigma – a curious reversal of the earlier avoidance of family agencies due to their association with welfare. On the other hand, psychiatric clinics enjoyed higher professional prestige and received more referrals from other agencies, particularly from other doctors—though, as one social worker griped, social workers were doing the bulk of the work in both clinic and agency.⁷⁴⁷ Most tellingly, the study in Illinois also observed a gulf in relationships between clinic and family service. There were very few referrals between the two sets of agencies, and both tended to see themselves as the sole source of counseling assistance in their community—even when both clinic and family agency were present. By the 1960s, the deterioration of the sense of common cause was palpable, even as their functions converged.

Perhaps the most significant set of differences lay in the source of funding for the two agencies, and the strategies needed to acquire and maintain funding. Ralph Ormsby of Family Service of Philadelphia argued that if family service agencies could point out that, on the ground, they were performing similar functions to psychiatric clinics, then “a reasonable amount of the federal public health fund money might become available to

⁷⁴⁶ *Cooperation Toward Mental Health*, p. 20-21, 35, 48-50, 63; William Hill, et al. *Family Service Agencies and Mental Health Clinics* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1971), p. 32-33

⁷⁴⁷ *Cooperation Toward Mental Health*, p. 54-55; Hill, p. 19-20, 38; Austin, p. 51.

family service.”⁷⁴⁸ Top-level representatives from NIMH assured the FSAA that the federal agency viewed family agencies as a mental health resource, but were still trying to clarify the respective relationships between community mental health and family service.⁷⁴⁹ While the Act gave the NIMH the power to veto plans proposed by state-level mental health planning commissions, and could have plausibly exerted influence to include family agencies, federal officials seemed content to let that aspect be determined on the state and local level. The result was a highly varied set of relationships. Even prior to the enactment of the Community Mental Health Act, states had shown a variety of preferences for the use of social work in mental health, with states such as New York emphasizing psychiatry while California reached out to the social work profession.⁷⁵⁰ Such patterns persisted in the wake of mental health legislation, and the inclusion of family agencies seemed to turn mostly on the political mobilization of such agencies to gain access to statewide planning, as they had in New Jersey. Only a handful of states had state-level organizations of family service agencies, and in the initial days of drawing up plans for statewide mental health plans in 1963 and 1964, family agencies were rarely poised to assert their prerogatives. Fearing that family agencies would be “shoved aside,” the FSAA urged its agencies to organize at the state level, and hired a staff consultant to advise agencies on mental health issues. A number of states with such groups, particularly in the mid-Atlantic and in California, were able to participate in state-level planning.

⁷⁴⁸ FSAA Directors, May 13-14, 1963, Folder 5, Box 5.

⁷⁴⁹ FSAA Directors, Apr. 27-28, 1964, Folder 5, Box 5.

⁷⁵⁰ Grob, p. 172-173; Thomas J. Kane, “A Study of the Interorganizational Relationship Between Community Mental Health Centers and Family Service Agencies” (DSW, Catholic University, 1972), p. 16.

In most states, though, the clinic's connections with the medical establishment proved more powerful than family agencies' own political power. In New Orleans, for example, mental health planning brought to the surface the tensions between the psychiatric establishment and the social welfare leadership of the city. Psychiatrists based at Tulane Medical School took charge of the mental health planning process. Operating behind the scenes and without the input of the Social Welfare Planning Council (dominated by voluntary agencies), they moved to consolidate most of the mental health services under their control. Franklin Parks, the head of New Orleans Family Service, wrote to the FSAA that his agency feared that the psychiatrists were going to monopolize the mental health funding, and efforts to get them to work with the social welfare community met with "hostility and insults," infuriating local social work leadership. The sense of estrangement continued when it became clear that the new community mental health agency, instead of focusing on work with de-institutionalized patients, was in fact intending to offer marriage counseling and family counseling services similar to those of the family agency. Parks believed that the clinic had reduced the number of applicants to the family agency. A study of family agency relationships with clinics in New England discerned similar patterns. The directors of clinics were more aggressive and more politically astute about building relationships with other community facilities that would insure their organizational health, and seemed to be encroaching on the family field's function. Family agencies, concluded the researcher, "seemed to be finding themselves on a rather slippery road to obsolescence."⁷⁵¹

⁷⁵¹ Franklin Parks to Clark Blackburn, Mar. 16, 1963; "Report of FSAA Contact – New Orleans," Nov. 1, 1967, Folder 39, Box 41, FSAA Supp. 1.; Kane, p. 88.

Most supporters of the legislation had not anticipated the swing of community mental health toward the counseling functions of family service. Local clinics had been intended to help care for the seriously mentally ill outside of institutions. However, the federal act has been designed to shift costs over to the states relatively rapidly, presuming that states would be able to cut back on mental hospital costs. This, in fact, did not happen, and community clinics did not capture the state support to help offset federal funds. Funding problems made clinics even more interested in serving clients who could pay fees and who took less time—not the seriously ill. As Gerald Grob observes, the emphasis on therapy rather than on hospital-like care appealed to the public and professionals. Therapy, and “services” in general, were cheaper, and did not come with the connotation of dependency that “care” implied. Therapy was more optimistic and easier to provide than “care”. Family service agencies had learned this lesson about welfare decades earlier. The two institutions, though retreating from different populations, ended up occupying the same ground and avoiding the least desperate.⁷⁵²

Family service agencies and community mental health clinics left large numbers of clients went unserved. Those who were admitted often did not get what they wanted. A study in Chicago revealed that an emergency referral service in the city consistently had difficulty finding agency resources to meet psychiatric emergencies. Many agencies, both mental health and family service, had waiting lists, had closed their intake because of demand, had residence requirements, or tough eligibility standards for free care. In one case, searching for counseling help for a child raped by her stepfather, the local clinic could offer an appointment five months later. Two weeks after the inquiry, the executive

⁷⁵² Grob, p. 254, 271.

of the family agency agreed to personally take the child on as a case, skipping the agency's own long waiting list. For those who made it through the list, the Illinois study found, only about a third of clients in either agency received all the services that they required.⁷⁵³ As the study in New England, written by a veteran of both family service and community mental health, concluded, "Decisions with respect to inter-organizational relationships appear therefore to be made more on the basis of gains in power and domain rather than for the betterment of mankind."⁷⁵⁴

Project ENABLE

The sense of increasing competition from community mental health may have made family agencies more sensitive to criticisms such as Richard Cloward's. In singling out family service agencies and psychiatric clinics, Cloward addressed the elite cadre of social work. The member agencies of the Family Service Association of America, roughly 300 in the early 1960s, employed only about 2200 professional social workers. It was a drop in the bucket of the estimated 116,000 people classified as "social workers" in the United States. But the total figure that encompassed a wide variety of workers and positions, professional and nonprofessional, from the intake workers at public welfare agencies, employees of "group work" institutions such as the YMCA, medical social workers, and so on. Private family agencies, despite their small numbers, remained part of the elite of social work. They were highly professionalized and were visible and prominent within social welfare circles. While only a quarter of all social workers in the country had a two-year MSW degree, 82 percent of family agency workers did.

⁷⁵³ Welfare Council, p. 24; *Cooperation Toward Mental Health*, p. 40.

⁷⁵⁴ Kane, p. 149.

Moreover, the FSAA published the *Journal of Social Casework*, the leading professional journal for family caseworkers. And historically, the practice of professional casework had been birthed in the Charity Organization societies (the predecessors of private family agencies), and social work education had remained oriented to the environment of private social agencies. In short, family service agencies were one of the pinnacles of professional practice in social work in the United States. Disparaging the “talking process” went to the heart of social work’s image of its best practice, which at the same time was being challenged as insufficiently professional by mental health clinics.⁷⁵⁵

Cloward had not been the first to discern this trend in private welfare agencies. Malcolm Nichols, president of the Family Society of Boston reminded FSAA agencies in 1947 that “full government responsibility for meeting basic financial needs of permanently or temporarily deprived is neither an accomplished fact nor a completely accepted principle,” and that they should take care before discontinuing financial assistance. A decade later another author deplored the inwardness of casework agencies and the “tremendously smug sense of satisfaction about things as they are in casework and a closed mind that refuses to inquire whether there are new ways to confront the problems we are attempting to slough off.” For the “hard to reach” clients, she argued, it was the paucity of agency offerings as much as their own set of problems that entangled them with so many different social agencies. Cloward built on this line of criticism by

⁷⁵⁵ United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Social Welfare Assembly, and U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Salaries and Working Conditions of Social Welfare Manpower in 1960* (New York: National Social Welfare Assembly, 1960), p. 35-36; William McCurdy, *Characteristics of the Professional Staff of Family Service Agencies* (New York: FSAA, 1960), p. 2; “Facts About Manpower in Family Service,” Mar. 2, 1964, Folder 38, Box 17, FSAA.

suggesting that the problems lay not in the clients, but in the agencies. Harkening back to the phrase the St. Paul Family Centered Project had popularized in the 1950s, Cloward noted “we seem to forget that the so-called multiproblem family is fundamentally a multideprived family,” trying to seek resources from a number of institutions. It was the agencies that were limited, not the clients.⁷⁵⁶

Family agencies had been wrestling with the question of “multi-problem” or “hard-to-reach” clients since such populations were identified in the 1950s. Agencies were genuinely divided over their responsibility to “the disorganized bottom layer of the central city,” as one study described it. Some agencies, inspired by such demonstrations as St. Paul’s Family Centered Project, undertook their own outreach. Family and Children’s Services of Nashville started a small pilot project with 12 families with “multiple problems” run jointly with the Nashville Housing Authority. Others thought public institutions were the logical place to deal comprehensively with the range of needs that such families presented. Social workers in all of these agencies agreed that dealing with the poorest of the poor took an immense amount of time and resources. Some believed that the family agency’s specialty was preventative work, and that such families were beyond their reach; others, who emphasized the ability of social casework to rehabilitate people, nonetheless felt that agencies needed to mix such difficult cases with more promising ones. As Dawson Bradshaw, the executive director of Family Service of St. Paul, Minnesota, observed, there was “uncertainty in our thinking whether we should

⁷⁵⁶ Malcolm S. Nichols, “That Second ‘Major Function,’” *Highlights* (Feb. 1947): 17; Ruth Lindenberg, “Hard to Reach: Client or Casework Agency?” *Social Work* (Oct. 1958): 26; Cloward, p. 137.

invest our effort in the more hopeful cases with fewer problems, or in the messy cases....”⁷⁵⁷

It was also becoming more and more apparent to family agencies in urban areas that these “hard to reach” clients were often minorities. Whitney Young, the new head of the Urban League, addressed the FSAA’s national convention in 1963 and took them to task for not serving black families adequately. Young, an MSW himself and a sympathetic critic of social work, had done a community assessment of the social service needs of Roxbury, Boston, where 70 percent of Boston’s African American population lived in 1960, and had criticized the decision of the local family service agency to close their branch office there. Young told the FSAA that “the image of Family Service in far too many Negro communities is that of an agency whose efforts are directed mainly toward helping middle-class families to solve their problems,” with only a “casual and cursory concern” for the poor.⁷⁵⁸ Even family agencies that tried to reach out to African American clients found themselves struggling to make their traditional program of casework fit the client’s needs. An experimental program in San Diego that foreshadowed Project ENABLE tried to promote group discussion sessions around family issues in a poor black neighborhood, but had great difficulty getting people to participate. The question of the division of caseloads between the “easily accessible” and the

⁷⁵⁷ Harold Wilensky and Charles Lebeaux, *Industrial Society and Social Welfare*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 172; William F. Moynihan, *An Agency for All Ages The Story of Family and Children’s Service, 1943-1993* (Nashville, Tenn.: Family and Children’s Service, 1993), p. 53; FSAA Mid-Atlantic Regional Executives’ Workshop, May 6, 1960; Notes on Committee on Range and Emphases, Sept. 16-17, 1960, both in Folder “Function 1958-1960,” Box 31, FSAA; Family Centered Project Group Discussion Minutes, Jan. 7, 1955, Folder 8, Box 1, St. Paul Family Centered Project Records, SWHA.

⁷⁵⁸ FSAA Directors, Apr. 27-28, 1964, Folder 5, Box 5; Dennis Dickerson, *Militant Mediator: Whitney M. Young Jr.* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), p. 125-126; Whitney Young, “The Racial Crisis—Implications for Family Service,” *Highlights* (Feb. 1964): 35-44.

“difficult to engage but in need of treatment,” the agency concluded, was “a question for resolution in the 1960s.”⁷⁵⁹

Young’s criticism demonstrates how the increasing prominence of racial problems was helping build attention to poverty as well. While segregation and voting rights would be the primary concern of the formal civil rights movement, one of the more contentious historical debates surrounding the War on Poverty is the role that the civil rights movement, as well as the threat of urban violence in black ghettos, played in inspiring the new wave of anti-poverty legislation. But to whatever the degree that race influenced the debates within the Kennedy administration on the earliest forms of the War on Poverty, race and poverty were clearly linked in the eyes of increasingly vocal black activists, and poverty, welfare, and race were linked in the eyes of a broad swath of white America.⁷⁶⁰

Race was a ginger issue for the FSAA. The national organization had taken several public stands on racial or racially charged issues in the early 1960s. It had joined an *amicus curiae* brief filed in support of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare efforts to discipline Louisiana after it removed thousands of families, mostly black, from the ADC rolls in a rigid enforcement of the “suitable home” provision. The New Orleans Family Service Society had engaged in an active letter-writing campaign in opposition to the state policy, and also wrote on behalf of keeping public schools open in

⁷⁵⁹ “Family Service for a Changing World,” FSAA Western Workshop, Oct. 1962, Folder “Function 1961-1964,” Box 31, FSAA.

⁷⁶⁰ Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage, 1971) p. 246, were the first to develop this view. Patterson, p. 134, takes strong exception, while Matusow, p. 120, sees a much closer link between the civil rights movement and anti-poverty policy.

the wake of court desegregation orders.⁷⁶¹ On the other hand, the FSAA had only in 1960 brought an African American onto its national Board, psychologist Kenneth Clark. In 1961, the board debated the membership of the Family Service Association of Shreveport, Louisiana. Though Shreveport's population was one-third black, the board of the agency was all-white. The FSAA board split two-to-one in favor, with Sidney Hollander protesting vigorously that the agency clearly violated the FSAA's stipulation that boards be "representative" of the community. The Board was cautious and gradualist; the following year, when the same question arose, the Board noted that there were some agencies that served blacks and that "may deplore certain situations that exist but it may be unable to go against the sentiment of the community without completely undermining the agency's support. One cannot go ahead of public sentiment--the only way to bring about change in these areas is to do it slowly." Even when the Board came out in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it faced protest from agencies in the South for getting involved in politics.⁷⁶²

Poverty's emergence on the national agenda has usually been linked to the publication of Michael Harrington's *The Other America* in 1962. By documenting the millions of poor people who had been obscured by the affluence of the 1950s, Harrington found an audience among national level policy makers, including President John Kennedy. Kennedy had come to believe by 1963 that a broader effort was needed to

⁷⁶¹ Franklin Parks to Clark Blackburn, July 7, 1960, Folder 35, Box 41, FSAA Supp.; "Brief on Behalf of Family Service Association of America on Hearings Held by the Commissioner of Social Security as to the Acceptability of Louisiana's Plan for Aid to Dependent Children," Nov. 22, 1960, Folder ADC-Amicus Curiae, Box 53, National Social Welfare Assembly Supplement 2, SWHA.

⁷⁶² Hollander had been active in a number of interracial organizations from the 1940s. FSAA Executive Committee Minutes, Sept. 16, 1960, Folder 21, Box 6; FSAA Board of Directors Minutes, May 11-12, 1961; May 10-11, 1962; April 29-30, 1965, Box 5.

address poverty than the modest welfare bills he had passed early in his administration, including the 1962 Public Welfare Amendments. As numerous studies of the origins of the War on Poverty have shown, Kennedy's economic advisors began showing interest in the question of poverty in 1963, and saw it as a much larger and distinct problem from the issue of welfare. Moreover, as planning for a poverty program gained steam, key policymakers grew more and more exasperated with the social work establishment. On a national level, anti-poverty proposals from federal departments such as Health, Education and Welfare and the Department of Labor seemed to play more to institutional habits of narrow, categorical programs rather than the broad-based, innovative attack the poverty task force sought. On a local level, they saw welfare bureaucracies as working against, rather than with the poor; as one said, "the institutions responsible for solving the problem was in large part responsible for the problem."⁷⁶³

Such attitudes paralleled the thinking in other parts of the Kennedy Administration. Attorney General Robert Kennedy, as the head of an anti-delinquency task force, had become deeply involved in the Mobilization for Youth, the delinquency project headed by Lloyd Ohlin and Richard Cloward of Columbia University since the late 1950s. Ohlin and Cloward's theory that children in slum areas shared the same, normal aspirations as middle class children, but as they became teenagers, they found the normal pathways to upward mobility "blocked" by lack of opportunity. Delinquency was

⁷⁶³Matusow, 97-127; James Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1985* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 126-141; Edward Berkowitz, *Mr. Social Security: The Life of Wilbur J. Cohen* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), p. 191-198; Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), p. 41-42; Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 158-165; Jennifer Mittelstadt, "The Dilemmas of the Liberal Welfare State, 1945-1965: Gender, Race, and Aid to Dependent Children" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2000), p. 270-278; Frank Mankewicz, quoted in Michael Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), p. 151.

then an alternate path to fulfill those legitimate aspirations. The solution, embodied in MFY, was then to try to re-orient the structures in which poor urban children lived in order to create more opportunity and reduce crime. Kennedy's committee, and the Attorney General himself, embraced the theory and put it at the heart of their deliberations on delinquency. One of the most tangible goals, wrote Sanford Kravitz, a committee member, would be to induce "change and adaptation in prevailing social services, and educational institutions, employment services, even political structures."⁷⁶⁴

Voluntary agencies came in for their own set of criticism. Nationally, the anti-institutional mood alighted on voluntary agencies in a well-publicized study done by Robert Hamlin of Harvard's School of Public Health in 1961. Hamlin studied the financial practices of 56 national voluntary agencies such as the National Tuberculosis League, the former anti-polio National Foundation, and other groups. In a stinging rebuke, Hamlin argued that these were not "self-contained little organizations" that voluntarism connoted. Rather, they were huge "public trusts" that consumed over half of the \$292 million they raised on fund raising, administration, and "educational purposes" often masquerading as fundraising. Even local chapters, better monitored by their United Funds, were often utterly inefficient, expensive, and self-interested. Excoriating the agencies for being more interested in self-perpetuation than in serving public interests, Hamlin called for a national commission to certify the accounting practices of voluntary agencies—a proposal not unlike the regulation of fundraising during World War Two. Outraged health agencies, led by Basil O'Connor of the National Foundation, protested

⁷⁶⁴Matusow, 109-119; Patterson, 138-141; Kravitz quoted in Matusow, p. 111.

the Hamlin report, though the FSAA (not singled out by Hamlin) concurred with the report's findings save for the recommendation of the national commission.⁷⁶⁵

Casting voluntary agencies as lumbering, selfish bureaucracies rather than small-scale efforts of altruism, the Hamlin report helped undermine the credibility of those agencies. Cloward, in the spirit of the Hamlin report, accused family agencies of raising money in the name of the poor in order to serve the middle class. The United Fund drives that family agencies relied upon, he argued, often fell back on images of poverty, building on pity to motivate donors. This had the effect, he argued, of creating the illusion that the voluntary sector was in fact solving the problems it campaigned under—even if its actual efforts were much more narrow and modest. Cloward's accusation did not accurately capture the strategy of family agencies themselves, as they had been vigorously trying to shake off the aura of almsgiving since the New Deal in order to distinguish themselves from welfare. Fundraising was a blunt instrument, though, and campaigners distant from the agencies themselves still found pity the stronger pull—national United Way campaign art stressed in the early 1960s, as it had for decades, helpless children. Even decades later, one fundraiser for Jewish social work recalled that, “When push comes to shove, we trot out the same photograph of the elderly woman moved from a ghetto apartment to a new housing development under Jewish auspices,” instead of their support of family counseling or cultural programming.

⁷⁶⁵ “Fund Waste Laid to Health Units,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1961, p. 43; “Charities Scored on Fiscal Report,” *NYT*, July 31, 1961, p. 1; “U.S. Curbs Urged on Charity Funds,” *NYT*, Oct. 11, 1961, p. 32; “Family Agencies Chided on Funds,” *NYT*, Nov. 15, 1961, p. 36; Robert H. Hamlin, *Voluntary Health and Welfare Agencies in the United States: An Exploratory Study* (New York: Schoolmasters’ Press, 1961); FSAA Directors, Nov. 12, 1961, Folder 3, Box 5.

Cloward's indictment was off the mark when narrowly applied to family agencies, but it struck a chord when examining the organized fundraising that supported them.⁷⁶⁶

With the voluntary establishment as discredited as the welfare bureaucracy, the planners of the War on Poverty, and particularly the Community Action program, saw their efforts as a way to extend services into areas that had been neglected by both voluntary and public institutions. Community Action became the most visible aspect of the War on Poverty, as Kennedy's assassination led Lyndon Johnson to try to capitalize on the dead President's legacy and pass a poverty bill. In the disoriented, hothouse atmosphere of the White House in late 1963 and early 1964, the antipoverty program was infused with holdovers from Kennedy's juvenile delinquency planning group.

Reinventing anti-delinquency and opportunity theory as "community action," the limited demonstration project proposed by the anti-delinquency group was expanded to a national program by Johnson, whose understanding of the radical impulse behind community action appears to have been limited.⁷⁶⁷ But even its most moderate proponents foresaw meaningful structural change in poor communities. Sergeant Shriver told the National Council on Social Welfare that despite the proliferation of voluntary agencies, relatively few of the poor were served by them, and that the War on Poverty promised to do more than simply "individual casework." Adam Yarmolinsky, chief of staff for the Kennedy poverty task force, anticipated that the key conflicts in community action would be between "traditional charitable organizations" and newly created community action

⁷⁶⁶ United Way of America, *People and Evens* (Alexandria, Va.: United Way of America, 1977), p. 166, 167; Donald Feldstein, "The Changing Client System of Jewish Federations," in Barry Kosmin and Paul Ritterban, eds. *Contemporary Jewish Philanthropy in America* (Savage, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991), p. 225.

⁷⁶⁷ Matusow, p. 120-123.

agencies. Some key poverty warriors took an even dimmer view of the voluntary sector and its casework philosophy—"a big fraud," according to Richard Boone, one of the more radical members of the staff of the Office of Economic Opportunity.⁷⁶⁸

For progressives within the family service movement, such attitudes were disheartening but not unexpected. While acknowledging the shift of family agencies away from material needs, activists such as Sidney Hollander had been pushing for years for private welfare organizations to take a more active advocacy role for improving public welfare in local communities and pushing for more expansive social legislation in Congress. Hollander had helped underwrite staff positions at the FSAA and the National Social Welfare Assembly (an umbrella organization of national voluntary welfare agencies) in order to sharpen their attention on "public issues." The activism of both organizations had waxed and waned over the 1950s. But in the early 1960s, with a Democratic administration that promised new attention to social welfare, the leadership of top voluntary associations had advocacy on the tips of their tongues. Hollander wrote to Wickenden in 1961 after a convention of voluntary groups, "Everybody-but everybody was urging social action; action by agencies, by boards, by staffs. It's now welfare's fair haired boy."⁷⁶⁹ Some of this fell back on the traditional concern for adequate welfare provision. Staff members of the United Community Funds and Councils said bluntly in 1960, "the voluntary agencies are simply not equipped to provide financial assistance and it is foolish for them to try to do so." Hollander wryly noted of the Community Fund's

⁷⁶⁸ Sargent Shriver, "Poverty in the United States -- What Next?" *Social Welfare Forum 1965* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965) p. 55-66; Yarmolinsky quoted in Gillette, p. 77; Boone quoted in Matusow, p. 117.

⁷⁶⁹ Sidney Hollander to Elizabeth Wickenden, May 23, 1961, Box 74, Section III, Hollander Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD.

position, "If ever I saw a masterpiece of ice-hot enthusiasm that's it. Still should be grateful that they're noting that there is such a thing as Public Assistance."⁷⁷⁰ On the local level, though, family agencies had not been as forthcoming in supporting higher welfare standards. Hollander again complained that when the legislature in Maryland considered welfare appropriations, "there might have been an executive or two on hand to back you up and perhaps a few well-meaning ladies, but almost never any of the board big shots whose voices would have carried weight."⁷⁷¹ The activism borne of concern and fear in the late 1940s in Baltimore had faded with the years. As Cloward observed, it was often easier for family agencies simply to disavow responsibility for giving assistance than to enter the complex and controversial process of trying to raise public assistance benefits.

Leaders of voluntary agencies realized that they had been sidelined by the War on Poverty as it began to unfold in early 1964. Elizabeth Wickenden, a key broker among voluntary organizations and public policymakers, wrote in February, "I am still uneasy about the poverty picture for a variety of reasons.... I suppose this whole thing will shake down in time and in the meantime I think it is just as well to let Sargent Shriver struggle with it." Clark Blackburn, general director of the FSAA, went to Washington in April to meet with Shriver's deputies "in an attempt to get a clear picture of their thinking," and expressed particular concern about the community action program. Such unease and distance was a distinct shift from their relationship with Washington of just a few years earlier—both Wickenden and Blackburn had served on the Ad Hoc Committee on Public Welfare convened by Abraham Ribicoff, President Kennedy's Secretary of Health,

⁷⁷⁰ Merrill Krughoff to Donald Morgan, Feb. 25 1960, Folder 243, Box 24, SPFCP; Hollander to Wickenden, May 23, 1960. Box 74, Section III, Hollander Papers.

⁷⁷¹ Hollander to Esther Lazarus, Apr. 22, 1964, Box 4, Sect. III, Hollander Papers.

Education, and Welfare, which had put the imprimatur of the voluntary sector and professional social work on the 1962 Public Welfare Amendments. Grace Coy, an FSAA Board member who headed its Public Issues committee, and who lived in Washington, D.C. reported to the board that the drafters of the Economic Opportunity act wanted a “new broom to go in and do a new sweeping job;” private agencies such as FSAA members “were not held in high esteem.” She urged getting in on planning as soon as possible so that the poverty program did not “go over our heads.”⁷⁷² To have gone from acknowledged leaders in the field to the periphery, if not the enemy, was bewildering.

Cloward’s indictment stung also. Dorothy Beck, the FSAA statistician who compiled the report on family service clientele that Cloward had cited, reviewed her own statistics to evaluate the legitimacy of Cloward’s attack. Writing to Florence Hollis, a veteran social work educator, Beck claimed that family agencies were not, in fact, discriminating against poor people. Family agencies served poorer clientele for shorter periods of time, it was true, but often times it meant they were helping them by referring them to the appropriate agency. The majority of their clients receiving more than one interview, she added, were still lower middle class or below, and certainly not privileged. Nor, as Cloward had also claimed, were family agencies trying to still raise money under the guise of giving material aid to the poor—though she admitted that some United Funds still indulged in that practice. Finally, though, there were certain “cultural and

⁷⁷² Elizabeth Wickenden to Theodore Shuchat, Feb. 5, 1964, Folder Wickenden Social Policy, Jan.-Apr. 1964, Box 57, National Social Welfare Assembly Records, Supplement 2, SWHA; FSAA Board of Directors Minutes, Apr. 27-28, 1964, Folder 5, Box 5, FSAA.

communication barriers” that inhibited the best possible counseling relationship between family service social workers and poor clients.⁷⁷³

Marginalized, to some degree guilty as charged, and cognizant of the coming wave of federal spending on poverty, FSAA leadership decided to try to insert themselves into the War on Poverty. The FSAA had recently completed one of its first projects with NIMH funding, a joint effort with the Child Study Association of America to train FSAA caseworkers in group discussion techniques for parent education. The program aimed to bolster family agencies’ competency in “family life education,” an amorphous educational concept that had coalesced in the immediate postwar era. Most concretely, it described any effort to convene groups of parents to discuss issues surrounding parent-child relationships. For the roughly one-third of FSAA agencies that used it as a program, it was often directed at Parent-Teacher Associations and similar groups and envisioned as a preventative technique to forestall family breakdown. FSAA agencies had mixed feelings about family life education; on the one hand, as Family Service of St. Paul argued to its United Fund in the late 1940s, it could be used as a “case finding” device to attract new groups to the agency. On the other hand, many caseworkers felt that FLE did not really draw on any of the counseling techniques they had been trained in, and was a distraction to their core mission.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷³ Dorothy Faas Beck to Florence Hollis, Aug. 7, 1964, Folder “Function 1961-1964,” Box 31, FSAA. The statistics in question are in Dorothy Faas Beck, *Patterns in Use of Family Agency Service* (New York: FSAA, 1962).

⁷⁷⁴ “Explanation of Budget Request,” July 1947. Directors 1947 folder, Box 2, FSSP; “Preventative Casework,” *Journal of Social Casework* (May, 1948): 193-194; John G. Hill and Ralph Ormsby, “The Value of Cost Analysis to the Family Agency,” *Journal of Social Casework* (Oct. 1952), p. 330-337; FSAA Directors, May 13-14, 1963, Box 5.

As the initial stages of local planning for the War on Poverty got underway in the fall of 1964, following the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act, Blackburn told his member agencies it was time for them to try to think about new ways of reaching out to “sub-culture” groups they had ignored before, people whose “grinding poverty has reduced them to creatures able only to struggle for existence.” In truth, it seems, Blackburn envisioned little family agencies could do to address these people, whose basic needs were jobs, education, and better housing. However, with minority groups less troubled than the “multi-problem” families, he hoped that re-tooled efforts by private agencies along the lines of group education might prove a worthwhile and effective means of extending the skills of family agencies. Still, on the local level, in late 1964 and early 1965, few family service agencies reported developing any projects to propose to local CAAs, though a number were involved in local planning efforts.⁷⁷⁵

The national FSAA decided to take matters into their own hands and propose a national program that could be delivered as a package to local agencies to propose to their Community Action Agency. This pattern was not distinctive to the voluntary sector; most of the programs eventually run by CAAs were “national emphasis programs” designed by or filtered through the national Office of Economic Opportunity.⁷⁷⁶ The FSAA and the Child Study Association contacted the Urban League in early 1965 and proposed a joint venture demonstration project to bring parent education groups to minority families with OEO funds. The Urban League, sharing a similar belief in upward mobility and the power of social work, agreed to the prospect but on the condition that it

⁷⁷⁵ Clark Blackburn, “A Family Agency’s Role in Programs Combating Poverty,” Sept. 18, 1964, Folder “Function 1961-1964,” Box 31; Marian Schmitz to Franklin Parks, Dec. 1, 1964, Folder 37, Box 41; FSAA Directors, Apr. 29-30, 1965, Box 5, all FSAA.

⁷⁷⁶ Matusow, p. 265.

would involve intensive work with actual families, and not merely training for social workers. An exploratory meeting with Sanford Kravitz of the OEO's research and demonstration office presented this vision for the project: it would create a significant corps of people with specialized training who could help train other workers, particularly "indigenous" personnel, in these techniques; it would help clients take advantage of other opportunities opened up by the War on Poverty; and it would educate social work professionals about the problems of the poor from the mouths of the poor themselves. Kravitz encouraged the group, and urged them to submit an application under the EOA's section 207, which provided his office's funding. He told the group that the OEO was in need of sound CAP projects, as most communities had not submitted plans and the fiscal year was drawing to a close.⁷⁷⁷

Over the next few months, the staffs of the three national agencies worked furiously to draft a proposal, traveling back and forth to Washington to consult with OEO officials, primarily Kravitz. The OEO staff urged them to increase the emphasis on "social action," that is, encouraging the clients of the program to take action to improve not only their intrafamilial relationships, but also community conditions. The official proposal, submitted in early May, framed the project as an effort to "motivate and encourage economically and socially disadvantaged families to participate more actively and more hopefully in productive demonstrations around their own individual, familial,

⁷⁷⁷ Manser, p. 5-9. Kravitz's office was funding at the same time a controversial organizing project by Saul Alinsky in Syracuse, New York that used OEO money to organize poor voters to challenge the local political establishment. See O'Connor, p. 167-173, Matusow, p. 248. Kravitz had an intimate understanding of the world of private welfare, having finished his social work dissertation on voluntary sector welfare planning councils in the early 1960s (at the same time he was working on the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency). The dissertation criticized such councils, particularly their elite lay leadership, for their distance from and ignorance of public welfare. Sanford Kravitz, "Sources of Leadership Input for Social Welfare Planning," (DSW, Brandeis University, 1963).

and community goals.” Group education, in short, would help disadvantaged families gain strength through discussion, and encourage them to take action in their community. If chronic deprivation interfered with self-esteem, Project ENABLE (Education and Neighborhood Action for Better Living Environment) would help rebuild it.

Clients were not the only subjects of rehabilitation in Project ENABLE. The program was explicitly envisioned as an effort to demonstrate the relevance of the voluntary sector to the War on Poverty. The executives of the three national agencies saw it as a way to show Washington that voluntary agencies have a “meaningful, essential contribution and stand ready to move in new directions.” Acknowledging “certain apprehensions as to what the future of the voluntary organization was,” the president of the FSAA’s Board urged his colleagues to endorse the ENABLE proposal to reach out to people “who are not now related in any way to our agencies.”⁷⁷⁸ Similarly, the OEO apparently viewed it as an opportunity to see if voluntary agencies could rehabilitate themselves. As the consulting company contracted to analyze ENABLE observed, the OEO considered the FSAA, CSAA and Urban League to be “middle-class people” and the poverty agency hoped the program would result in permanent changes in the policies of such agencies—to orient them more to the poor—and asked the consulting company to specifically evaluate this question.⁷⁷⁹

At the very least, OEO had a mandate to re-orient the existing social service structure to better meet the needs of the poor. In the spring of 1965, as the three voluntary organizations discovered, the OEO was not going to do it by giving grants to those

⁷⁷⁸ Manser, p. 7; FSAA Directors, Apr. 29-30, 1965.

⁷⁷⁹ Simulatics Corporation, *Evaluation of Project ENABLE* (Cambridge, Ma: Simulatics Corporation, 1967), p. IV-2.

organizations. Though Kravitz had been encouraging, Whitney Young, Clark Blackburn and Carl Scott of the CSAA got a different reaction from two OEO representatives during a meeting at the National Conference of Social Work in Atlantic City in May. The federal officials were blunt and hostile. They questioned the commitment of these “notoriously middle class organizations” to work with the poor, and suggested that ENABLE was “inappropriate, immaterial, incompetent, and impotent in the face of apathy, disorganization, or the fundamental problems of living in poverty.” Basically, they told the stunned executives, the organizations had to show that their member agencies were sincere, and that the proposal was not simply the recycled programs of past years. Outraged, Young, Blackburn and Scott nonetheless agreed to revise and resubmit.⁷⁸⁰

Their hopes built after a grueling series of meetings with OEO staff through the summer, but in early August the OEO said no. The three executives, angry at the rebuff, sent a telegram Shriver to ask him to take immediate action on the issue, and the telegram (presumably due to Young’s name on it) resulted in a meeting at the OEO the next week with Richard Boone, Jules Sugarman, and Kravitz. With the assurances of the voluntary agencies that they would conduct a “bold experiment rather than a bland demonstration,” the OEO agreed to fund the project for slightly less than \$1 million for national organization and training, and to recommend that local CAAs fund the programs at a local level. Nonetheless, the OEO was slow getting notice about the program out to its regional offices, and many local agencies had not heard of ENABLE by the end of 1965.

⁷⁸⁰ Manser, p. 13-15. Head Start had also emerged by the spring of 1965 as an easily implemented, popular program that CAAs could use to absorb unallocated funds, so the sense of urgency to fund ENABLE evaporated.

Finally, the presidents of the boards of the three agencies asked for a meeting with Shriver in late December. The OEO director, already chastened by a year of controversial community action, apologized for internal problems at the agency, expressed his personal belief in ENABLE and voluntary agencies, and promised that his staff would turn the heat on the regional organizations and some locals. The entire experience of gaining funding, recalled Ellen Manser, the project director, "vividly demonstrated the hostile climate for established social agencies."⁷⁸¹

Shriver did come through on his word. Applications vetted by local CAAs began filtering up to regional OEO offices in early 1966, and the program was firmly underway. Ultimately, 59 projects were funded, 32 of them joint operations between local FSAA members and Urban League locals, 21 run only by family agencies, and 6 by Urban Leagues. After group leaders were trained in a series of institutes across the country in late spring, the first effort at recruitment of parent groups began in early summer. A second series of groups were conducted in late summer, and regional program evaluators began filing reports on the progress of ENABLE in early fall. It is from these reports that this survey of the conduct and reception of the program is drawn.

The New Institutional Landscape: Family agencies were used to dealing with local planning and funding organizations such as Welfare Councils and Community Chests. In some localities, it was personnel from these pre-existing social service infrastructures who played an important role in planning the local War on Poverty. In

⁷⁸¹ Manser, p. 16-21; Minutes, FSAA ENABLE Advisory Committee, Oct. 20, 1965; Dec. 16, 1965; Jan. 12, 1966, Folder 28, Box 21, FSAA. Shriver singled out San Francisco and Chicago as two cities where he could not intervene on behalf of the program. San Francisco's CAAs had been thoroughly radicalized, whereas Chicago's were the province of a handpicked appointee of Richard Daley. Chicago did, however, agree to sponsor an ENABLE program. See Matusow, p. 248-249, 260-262 for brief discussions of community action in those two cities.

Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Beaumont, Texas, the CAA was housed in the same building as the local family service agency that sponsored ENABLE—hardly the reconfiguring of local power the planners had hoped for. In general, though, getting ENABLE approved meant dealing with an entirely new, hybrid public-private organization—some of which had vocal representation from poor minority groups as a result of the “maximum feasible participation” clause of the Economic Opportunity Act. Most typically, the primary CAA office in a given community was receptive to the ENABLE proposal, and helped the private agency shepherd the application through the steps to the regional office. In Baltimore, for example, the ENABLE team reported that the local CAA worked very hard with the voluntary agencies to get funding approved. Such attitudes were not simply in the spirit of building inter-institutional friendship. Many CAAs were still searching for ways to get programs underway that would bring quick, positive publicity and build the numbers of program participants. In Colorado Springs, for instance, ENABLE was the first program initiated by the local CAA, and in cities such as Providence, Little Rock, and Omaha, where the program gained positive publicity, ENABLE leaders complained that the CAA tried to take credit for their accomplishments. In other cities, there was outright hostility. In St. Paul, the CAA had its arm twisted by the regional OEO office in Chicago to fund ENABLE, and the agency subjected the voluntary organizations to low-level administrative harassment throughout the project. Stockton, California reported “active community opposition” to the funding of ENABLE, primarily from several prominent community activists. In cities where the primary CAA may have been friendly, relationships with branch offices in poor communities and local personnel were often not—battling not only over the intrusion of

“middle class” organizations, but over control of the “indigenous” workers trained by ENABLE. In Philadelphia, the tension went into the heart of the ENABLE program itself. Victoria Simms, a group discussion leader from the Urban League, who was also closely associated with the local CAA, displayed “real cynicism” about the potential of the program, to the point where she was finally let go by both ENABLE and the Urban League.⁷⁸²

As with CAAs generally, ENABLE advisory boards were asked to draw a third of boards from the “poverty population.” This varied in practice, as it did with CAAs. Several projects, such as in Houston and Philadelphia had, in the eyes of program consultants, too many representatives of the poor and lacked connections to local elites. On the other hand, in Dallas, where there was no Urban League to cooperate, the family agency admitted it had not been working much with the poor and didn’t know who to reach out to for the board; in Beaumont, there were “too many from the local power structure” and the poor on the board were “hand-picked.”⁷⁸³

Race, Class, Gender: ENABLE revealed complex race, gender, and class dynamics among organizations and employees within the project. Each project had an executive, usually the Family Service executive (almost always white), two half-time group leaders and a full time “community organizer,” each working with an aide drawn from the local community. Usually the community organizer, who helped recruit

⁷⁸² Fowler, Baltimore Program Evaluation, Sept. 19, 1966; Lawrence Brown, Colorado Springs Program Evaluation, [Oct. 4, 1966]; Juanita Dudley, Stockton Report, Sept. 9, 1966, all Folder 30; Mildred Roberts, St. Paul Report, [Sept. 21, 1966], Folder 31; Tal Fowler, Lancaster Program Evaluation, Sept. 19, 1966; Felton Alexander, Beaumont Report, [Nov. 1, 1966]; Selma Belewky, Philadelphia Report, [Oct. 28, 1966], all Folder 32, Box 21, FSAA. See Houston and Dallas reports for conflict over social work aides.

⁷⁸³ A. del Valle, Houston Report, [Sept. 26, 1966]; del Valle, Dallas Report, [Sept. 26, 1966], Folder 32, Box 21; Belewky, Philadelphia; Alexander, Beaumont. Felton Alexander, an ENABLE consultant from the Urban League, was hired to be the first executive director of the Dallas Urban League, which organized, in late 1966.

members and who also coordinated social action, was African American (though occasionally Latino) and an employee of the Urban League, while the group leaders, who ran the discussion groups, were often white caseworkers from the family agency, though a number of African Americans from the League also ran groups. Among the professional staff, relationships ran the gamut. The African-American and Latino staff worked closely and smoothly in Houston. In East Orange, New Jersey and Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the mixed black-white team worked well together and, administrators believed, was an important symbolic signal to their communities. In the Bronx, however, the young Jewish woman assigned from Jewish Family Service to be the group leader, was working with an African American man who was the community organizer. As the regional report delicately observed, "Teaming up white females with Negro males in predominantly Negro areas presented some concern in team relationships," and the woman soon resigned and was replaced by a married man from JFS who worked much better with the community organizer. In Baltimore, all possible schisms came to the fore in the team; the two group leaders, a "pushy" African-American woman from the Urban League "with strong middle-class values which she seeks to impose on all Negroes" and a young white woman with very clear ideas on how the project should be run, butted heads with the young black man who was hired as the community organizer. Tensions mounted to the point where the organizer was fired, who then punched the program director.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸⁴ Fowler, Baltimore Report, Sept. 19, 1966; Eunice Clay, Baltimore Program Evaluation, Sept. 23, 1966; Dudley Cawley, Pittsfield Program Evaluation [Jan. 5, 1967], all Folder 30; del Valle, Houston; East Orange Report, [Sept. 26, 1966]; Cawley, New York Program Evaluation, Sept. 16, 1966, both Folder 31, Box 21.

Outreach: The parents who did eventually participate in ENABLE were, overall, a substantially poorer group than the average FSAA agency clientele. The struggles of the program to reach those people during ENABLE demonstrate that in some senses, Cloward's critique of family agencies had been on the mark. These were groups largely alien to most family agencies, and sometimes even a stretch for the Urban League. Predictably, when faced with the task of recruiting, most of the community organizers turned to groups that were already organized. In communities where Head Start had begun, those parents were often the first recruited, and indeed, the program was promoted as a complement to Head Start. Church groups and neighborhood centers also were popular points of recruitment. The Minneapolis program admitted, "these are not the unreached." A few programs did plow new ground. The isolated Montopolis settlement on the outskirts of Austin, Texas, was one of the programs' success stories, where ENABLE helped residents lobby for water service and social services in their community. In places such as Austin, the ENABLE program was out ahead of the CAA, which turned to ENABLE for program recruits. Some genuine grass roots, door-to-door recruiting did take place in other cities, though, usually by the aides, whose role in recruitment was almost universally praised in those programs. This was sometimes less than it seemed, though. In Dallas, the regional consultant determined that the aides had simply recruited their small group of friends for the discussions. In other areas, such as Baltimore, door to door recruiting "has not had any magic effect in motivating people to attend the groups."⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸⁵ M. Roberts, Minneapolis Report, [Sept. 16, 1966], Folder 31; del Valle, Austin Report, [Sept. 26, 1966]; Alexander, Dallas Report [Oct. 10, 1966], Folder 32, Box 21; Fowler, Baltimore; Simulatics, p. V-1. 38

It was a long hot summer for the ENABLE group leaders. Several, already attuned to read client resistance in terms of apathy, attributed low turnout to the weather. Where project leaders had hoped for groups of twenty, in Philadelphia, the “summer heat” and lack of tangible benefits worked against participation and produced an irregular group of six to eight each session. In Chicago, where a riot sparked that summer after black youths were arrested for opening a fire hydrant, the program met outright hostility. The evaluator decided that “one has to question the effectiveness of this kind of program” in the two black housing projects where turnout averaged four per group. For one group in Pittsburgh, the turnout was a dismal two. Across the program, attendance fell below goals but these large cities were at the low end. St. Paul, where the agency had run family life education classes in the neighborhood prior to ENABLE, attendance was quite good. In Newark, one of the Spanish-speaking aides did a remarkable job in recruiting and maintaining the Hispanic group. Omaha’s aides targeted ADC mothers and showed no hesitancy in following up with people who had committed but were absent, building above average attendance.⁷⁸⁶

Efficacy: What actually happened in those groups, of course, was supposed to be what ENABLE was all about. ENABLE’s short duration precluded the types of longitudinal studies done on similar programs such as Head Start that attempted to measure the impact of the program on clients. Moreover, the first goal of the program, improving family

percent of the ENABLE participants in the first parent discussion groups said they had personally known a member of the ENABLE staff prior to the meetings. *Simulatics*, p. III-16.

⁷⁸⁶ Don Hoke, Chicago Report, [Sept. 26, 1966], Folder 30; Cawley, Newark Program Evaluation, Oct. 6, 1966; Bertha Shier, Omaha Report, Sept. 30, 1966, both Folder 31; Philadelphia Program Evaluation, Nov. 7, 1966; Clay, Pittsburgh Report, Oct. 3 1966, both Folder 32, Box 21; Roberts, St. Paul. In Pittsburgh, they found the target population had been “subject to many surveys and programs” and were suspicious of ENABLE.

relationships, is virtually unquantifiable. Nonetheless, ENABLE's evaluators tried, eschewing the measurement of behavior and attempting to see if the program had any impact on attitudes and knowledge of community resources. They concluded that the program had "often very dramatic" effects on parents, though "they cannot be described quantitatively." Survey results indicated that parents felt more ability to control aspects of their children's behavior and were able to see the child as an individual, though there was less change in attitude toward spouses. The program also claimed some success in more "realistic" expectations of children, both by educating about stages of child development. Some local reports contained hopeful evidence of improved awareness of child development and a sense of appreciation of a group where parents could come share their problems. In New Orleans, a glowing report described the initial "prevailing mood of hopelessness in these parents. They felt if they had no money to give their families, they had nothing to give. As the group meetings progressed and they identified concerns common to all parents, rich or poor, such as setting limits, teaching self-responsibility, assigning chores, their mood changed to one of hope." However, in places like San Diego (once again) group leaders steeped in casework with better-off clients were overwhelmed by the problems of their group and uncomfortable with the group method as a technique.⁷⁸⁷

The projects' second goal, "social action," is more amenable to evaluation. A handful of ENABLE groups, almost always identified as "mothers," fully embraced the notion and gravitated toward the welfare rights movement. In the Bedford-Stuyvesant chapter of

⁷⁸⁷ Dudley, San Diego Report, [Sept. 12, 1966], Folder 30, Box 21; Mildred Roberts and Josie Johnson, "'More Than Meetings' — The Impact on Parents," *Social Casework* (Dec. 1967): 618-625. New Orleans quote from Folder "Family Service Society, Current 1966-71," Box 25, Community Services Council Collection, Special Collections, University of New Orleans. Thanks to Kent Germany for this citation.

ENABLE, the community organizer led a discussion of Richard Cloward's articles on welfare rights organizing and helped link her group into the welfare rights protests that spread across the city in the summer of 1966. The Omaha group formed "Mothers for Adequate Welfare" which started a letter writing campaign for higher welfare allowances, and met with state legislators and the governor. In Boston, the Roxbury ENABLE participants organized a consumer-education group that led to an organized boycott of an exploitative local grocer, while parents in Minneapolis and Chicago Heights went to school board meetings to ask for better bus service and complain about restrictive fees. But in most areas, social action was interpreted as effecting some small, concrete change in the immediate range of neighborhood services. Half of the groups focused on improving recreational opportunities, often building or restoring a local playground. Others sought improvements in lighting or safety in their housing projects. Several family service agencies specifically encouraged a narrow interpretation of "social action." The executive of the Lancaster agency discouraged the staff from activity in areas "where there was little hope for any accomplishment" and urged them to focus on recreation. In Beaumont, the executive did not want to "rock the boat" and the African-American group leader was conscious of his position as a "Negro in a small southern community" and was reluctant to be seen as an agitator. Moreover, ENABLE efforts at social action often conflicted with local CAAs, who were also searching out ways to implement community change. In New Orleans, the local CAA specifically prohibited

ENABLE from conducting such efforts and pushed the program into “consumer education.”⁷⁸⁸

Aides: Of all the goals of ENABLE, recruitment of social work aides was probably its most tangible legacy. In that, it was of a piece with community action in general, which left a legacy of a new set of social services that created employment for 125,000 poor people. The aides recruited by ENABLE were primarily middle-aged African American women. The assessments by the teams of these workers were generally quite positive. For those programs that enjoyed reasonable attendance, it was clearly because the aides gave them entrée and legitimacy into these communities where family agencies in particular had little established rapport. But, as Alan Matusow observed of the CAA program in general, the people recruited into participation as ENABLE aides were often already upwardly mobile, and many aspired to problem-solving social work rather than adjuncts to the group leaders. In Salt Lake City, the aides were given a few articles on social casework, which, the regional consultant sniffed, raised their expectations “to be junior therapists.” The impact of the professional literature was evident from one case aide in that program who described her work with two clients “who had been asking for help for years with their multi-problems.” In Tulsa the aides had “middle class stretch,” in the eyes of the consultant, and identified more with workers than with clients. In Camden, aides ended up essentially doing “short term casework,” dealing with the immediate problems of the clients they were also trying to recruit. Despite the widespread

⁷⁸⁸Carter Lowe to Cawley, July 11, 1966; both Folder 30; Mary Guaridani to Dudley Cawley, July 28, 1966; Newark Report, [Sept. 26, 1966]; both Folder 31, Box 21; Franklin Parks to Manser, Nov. 24, 1965, Folder 37, Box 41, FSAA; Lancaster Report; Beaumont Report; “Seward Parents Speak Their Mind,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Sept. 17, 1966, p. 4; “Parents Rap School Book Rental Policy,” *Chicago Heights Star*, Feb. 26, 1967, p. 1, 4; “A New Way to Help Families Through Personal Involvement of the Poor,” *Highlights* (Sept.-Nov. 1967): 8-12.

admiration of the work of many of the aides, only a few of the agencies chose to employ them following the end of ENABLE. Though they obviously could extend the reach of many agencies, employing aides without social work training to take over some social work functions could clearly be construed as a threat to the professionalism of the agencies. ENABLE did, however, function as a conduit for many of the aides to find jobs elsewhere in local anti-poverty agencies.⁷⁸⁹

The End of ENABLE

Despite the fact that ENABLE was rarely implemented as smoothly and successfully as the planners would have liked, the national staff broadcast a message of optimism to agencies in the fall. OEO officials were much friendlier and receptive to the program than they had been a year before, the second round of groups in many cities had increased in attendance (in part, it appears, by recycling many members of the first groups), some of the worst personnel issues had been solved, and another 60 family agencies had expressed some interest in starting a program for 1967. However, project director Manser noted also the “lively debate about the total poverty program” in Congress during the summer of 1966. The Community Action Program had been rife with controversy nearly from the moment it was implemented. Protests from big-city mayors over deliberate circumvention of their authority helped rein in some of the more radical members of the national staff of CAP. The research and demonstration programs of the national office, through which the training program and national staff of ENABLE

⁷⁸⁹ Alexander, Tulsa Report, [Sept. 26, 1966]; Fowler, Camden Program Evaluation, both Folder 31; Jean Bryant, “A New Circle,” filed with Salt Lake City reports, 1966, Folder 32, Box 21, FSAA; ENABLE Fact Sheet [1967]; Manser to Elizabeth Ross, Apr. 26, 1967, both Folder 21, Box 27, FSAA; Matusow, p. 251.

was funded, came under particular fire, and its appropriation was in question. As a result, OEO had no answer for ENABLE and other programs seeking re-authorization in 1967. As the summer turned to fall, the national ENABLE office kept a stream of hopeful memos going out to its regional consultants and local programs, but recognized that the “present state of suspended animation” was hurting the ability to plan. National staff members began leaving to return to their parent organizations. In early December, Congress announced that it had drastically cut the budget for research and demonstration for the OEO, and had earmarked many of the funds going to local organizations. On both fronts, ENABLE found itself frozen out, save for a grant of \$97,486 to finish up the research aspects of the project “in a professional manner.”⁷⁹⁰

In early 1967, the program staff turned to evaluating ENABLE’s results. Given the techniques of the program, ENABLE held more potential for raising the consciousness of the agencies sponsoring it than radically improving the lives of the clients it worked with. On that front, ENABLE was ultimately disappointing. The program itself, as with many demonstration projects, enjoyed an *esprit de corps*, particularly among the national staff and often among local staffs as well, particularly in “successful” communities such as Little Rock and Austin. The dedication of social workers and the aides they recruited in some cities is clearly evident, and whatever modest gains came from ENABLE were, inevitably, rooted in the ability of its workers to make the program flexible and adaptable to local situations and the clients they dealt with. Repeatedly, the professionals found themselves surprised by the potential they

⁷⁹⁰ FSAA ENABLE Advisory Committee, May 2, 1966, Folder 28, Box 21; Memo, Ellen Manser to National Staff, June 28, 1966; Manser to FSAA Agency Executives, Aug. 25, 1966; Helen Weisbrod to Manser, Sept. 16, 1966; Manser to Urban League and FSAA Executives, Dec. 9, 1966, Folder 26, Box 21; O’Connor, p. 167-173.

encountered in the people who they worked with, both aides and discussion group members. A discussion among Midwestern ENABLE programs agreed, "There are more 'healthy' people in any community than the agencies realized." Manser, in her final report on the project, remarked on the "unexpected strength, talent, and enthusiasm" of the parents.⁷⁹¹

These were not universal sentiments, though. In Minneapolis, the gap between caseworker and clients remained. "The conditions under which these parents grew up and in which they now live make it exceedingly difficult for the leader to give the kind of help she is accustomed to give," the program reported. More traditional and conservative agencies, even within those willing to experiment with new techniques in ENABLE, found little to recommend it. Udell LaVictoire, head of Sunbeam Family Service in Oklahoma City, who was reported by a regional consultant as having "a great deal of faith in the power structure at the top," was not impressed by the experiment. He wrote Manser that he "wasn't exactly heartbroken" by the dim prospect of re-authorization, though he felt with more stress on individual rather than group service, the program could be more effective. In general, though, he deplored the fact that the OEO wanted to avoid "anything smacking of social work and social service," and concluded that "our poverty war has too much of the wrong kind of armament." La Victoire's position was harsher than most, as the follow-up study done on attitudes of agency executives noted a generally favorable opinion of their ENABLE experiment. However, little concrete

⁷⁹¹ Kansas City Report, Sept. 26, 1966, Folder 31, Box 21; ENABLE Executives' Meeting, St. Louis, Mar. 16-17, 1967, Folder 21, Box 27; Manser, p. 73.

change in the day-to-day operations of the agencies seemed evident once federal funds had dried up.⁷⁹²

The most lasting influence of Project ENABLE was the push it provided for private sector agencies to re-evaluate their relationship with the public sector, and specifically, to public money. As the project evaluation noted, participation in the program apparently helped convince many boards of agencies that utilizing public funds was not as direct a threat to agency integrity as many had feared. This is not to say that working with the OEO and local CAAs was a pleasant experience for private agencies. The antagonism and disorganization of the national office and many local programs were acutely obvious. Blackburn was still furious over the treatment of ENABLE by the OEO, writing to Shriver in 1967 of his “strong feeling that agencies eager to support the War on Poverty are being rebuffed.” More mundane struggles over issues such as indirect costs for agency support foreshadowed the types of routine disputes that would characterize non-profit contracting in coming decades. And working to get those funds, particularly on a local level, would require a different kind of budgetary politicking than family agencies were accustomed to, negotiating with public officials rather than the private sector Community Chest. But ENABLE did show that agencies could manage publicly funded programs without sacrificing an undue degree of autonomy, while at the same time financing new programs to help broaden the base of the agency’s financial support.

Moreover, in a significant number of communities, antipoverty planners had chosen expediency and trusted institutions over maximum feasible participation. 40

Councils of Social Agencies, dominated by the voluntary sector, were designated as the

⁷⁹²Minneapolis Report, Sept. 16, 1966, Folder 31, Box 21; Oklahoma City Report, Oct. 4, 1966; Udell LaVictoire to Manser, Jan. 4, 1967; Simulatics Corporation, p. IV-(33-35), V-8.

official CAA agencies by early 1965, with another 150 heavily involved in planning and running antipoverty programs. In Pittsburgh, a city considered at the outset by Sargent Shriver as a model OEO program, anti-poverty planners chose to use established agencies to serve new populations, rather than create a parallel system of institutions; Jewish Family and Children's Service, an FSAA affiliate in Pittsburgh, was a prime contractor of the local CAA for casework services (at the same time it ran its unsuccessful ENABLE program). Similarly, in New Orleans, the Family Service Agency ran both an ENABLE program and sold casework services to an OEO-funded community center in the impoverished Irish Channel neighborhood. Family and Child Services of Washington, DC, contracted with the United Planning Organization, the local CAA, to provide "intensive social services" in six neighborhood centers across the city. This was not a pattern limited to FSAA members. The Catholic Church became a major recipient of anti-poverty funds and was deeply involved in community action programs.⁷⁹³

Quickly on the heels of ENABLE came the 1967 Amendments to the Social Security Act that opened the door specifically to the provision of social services for the "strengthening of family life" from voluntary agencies as well as public institutions. As the 1962 Amendments drew near the end of their five-year expiration term in early 1967, it was becoming apparent that the social services encouraged by the 1962 Amendments had done little to reduce the size of welfare rolls. In fact, they had increased. As the 1967

⁷⁹³ Blackburn telegram to Shriver, Mar. 14, 1967, Folder 21, Box 27, FSAA; "Report of FSAA Contact—New Orleans," Feb 28, 1968, Folder 39, Box 41, FSAA Supp. 1; *People and Events*, p. 165; C. Michael Firmin, Jr., "Characteristics of Clients at Family and Child Services Prior to and Subsequent to the Establishment of Neighborhood Centers in 1965," Part I (MSW, Catholic University, 1968); Neil Gilbert, *Clients or Constituents?* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970), p. 45-49; Kenneth Heineman, "Model City: The War on Poverty, Race Relations, and Catholic Social Activism in 1960s Pittsburgh," paper presented at the Policy History Conference, St. Louis, Mo., 2002.

Amendments were being debated, AFDC recipients stood at 5 million persons, an increase of about 1.5 million from 1962. The proponents of social casework, the “service” at the heart of the 1962 Amendments, were widely discredited in the eyes of Congress. In addition, increasing racial tensions across the country, particularly rioting in African American inner-city neighborhoods in the summer of 1967, encouraged a tougher stance by conservative lawmakers on welfare issues. The 1967 Amendments thus instituted mandatory work or work training efforts by welfare recipients in order to maintain assistance, and also attempted to limit the number of families on the rolls due to illegitimacy and desertion.⁷⁹⁴

The 1967 Amendments did not abandon social services; in fact, it greatly widened their definition and provision. The interpretation of “services” in 1962 by the Bureau of Public Assistance, renamed the Bureau of Family Services, had been on social casework counseling, deemed “soft services” by later scholars. By 1967, the emphasis was on “hard” or “concrete” services, such as work training and day care. In the drafting and negotiation of the 1967 Amendments, Wilbur Cohen of HEW had stressed the need to pair supporting services to the new stress on work requirements, particularly day care, and the Amendments reflected that position. The Amendments reintroduced the option of purchase of service from voluntary organizations that had been dropped in 1962. Several factors may explain this. One was the rising prominence of vocational rehabilitation within HEW. Mary Switzer, head of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, became head of the new Social and Rehabilitation Service in the HEW, which merged the VRA, the Welfare Administration (home of the Bureau of Family Services) and the

⁷⁹⁴ Gilbert Y. Steiner, *The State of Welfare* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1971), p. 40-50.

Administration on Aging. The VRA, though its supporters had opposed purchase of service by welfare agencies, had in fact a long history of operating through purchase of service itself. With a vocational rehabilitation insider overseeing purchase of service, there was little chance that rehabilitation agencies would be crowded out. Moreover, Switzer knew that dispensing government contracts helped build a constituency to support continued funding of those services and the agency that dispensed them.⁷⁹⁵

The impact of the 1967 Amendments on the voluntary sector has generally been overshadowed by their effect on state-federal relationships. State administrators, with California leading the way, realized that the purchase of service allowances could be used to subsidize programs that had been entirely state funded. With no caps on the amount that the federal government would match, social service spending spiraled out of control in the early 1970s. But the funding formula in the Amendments was also a boon for voluntary agencies. Local United Ways realized that federal funding could provide a multiplier effect for voluntary agency programs. The 1967 Amendments allowed a 75 percent matching formula, so a local welfare agency could quadruple the amount of service provided by an agency it bought from. The issue facing local welfare agencies was coming up with the initial 25 percent that would be matched. Here, the United Way colluded in what one consulting group referred to as a "private sector conspiracy" to use voluntary sector funds as the seed money for federal matching funds for programs run by voluntary agencies. Technically, the 1967 Amendments restricted such practices. It allowed public welfare agencies to accept voluntary funds designated for a certain type of service. But the public agency had to have complete control over those funds, and no

⁷⁹⁵ Edward Berkowitz, *Disabled Policy: America's Programs for the Handicapped* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 174; Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending*, p. 20-21.

strings could be put on how the funds would be used. But private agencies, working with the local public welfare department, would arrange for donations so narrowly specified by location and type of service that it could only be provided by one voluntary sector social service agency. An example from Milwaukee showed how such regulations were avoided. The United Community Services (the local fundraising organization), a handful of voluntary sector social service agencies, and the Milwaukee County Welfare Department created an agreement where the UCS donated \$180,000 for a series of services such as family counseling or services to unwed parents. In this case, with some state funds also available, the county agency was able to obtain matching funds for the private donation and contract back with the private agencies for a total of \$1.4 million in services. Without state funds, the county still could have added three times the amount of the UCS donation. With little of the handwringing of the early 1960s, the FSAA board of directors concluded in 1967 that public funds were not a threat, with the appropriate safeguards, and started to plan other programs out of the national office to avail themselves of public funds to fund new outreach.⁷⁹⁶

Voluntary sector fundraisers were quick to recognize the potential for expanding their programs, and were often the party to propose such arrangements to local welfare administrators. Laundering voluntary money through the local welfare authority provided new funds for the public welfare program, and expanded the program of the voluntary

⁷⁹⁶ Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending*, p. 12-14; Neil Gilbert, "The Transformation of Social Services," *Social Service Review* (Dec. 1977); Candace Mueller, "Purchase of Service Contracting from the Point of View of the Provider," in Kenneth R. Wedel, et al., *Social Services by Government Contract: A Policy Analysis* (New York: Praeger, 1979): 46-54; Frank Newgent, "Problems and Issues in the Purchase of Care and Services—A State Viewpoint," in Iris Winogrand, ed. *Purchase of Care and Services in the Health and Welfare Fields* (Milwaukee: School of Social Welfare, University of Wisconsin, 1970), p. 29; Booz, Allen, and Hamilton. *Purchase of Social Service: Study of the Experience of Three States in Purchase of Service Under Contract Under the Provisions of the 1967 Amendments to the Social Security Act* (Washington DC, 1971), p. 40-45; FSAA Directors, May 15-16, 1967; Nov. 17, 1967, Folder 9, Box 8.

agency, with little apparent ill effect on the autonomy of the voluntary agency.

Voluntary agencies were enthusiastic—in three states studied in 1970, contracts with voluntary agencies, while representing only about 10 percent of purchase of service funds, numerically outnumbered welfare department contracts with other public agencies. Observers warned, though, that voluntary agencies would inevitably be influenced by public administrators. A consultant's report warned of the possibility of "gentle coercion" by public agencies on private agency programs, while another observer noted exactly that process in agencies who had contracted with vocational rehabilitation programs in earlier years.⁷⁹⁷

Such logrolling was questioned from the left and the right. George Wiley of the National Welfare Rights Organization, invited to a conference on purchase of service in 1970, reiterated the basic challenge that most social services were irrelevant to the poor. The basic problem of poverty was lack of money, and by helping stress service instead of agitating for better welfare, social service agencies "provide some substantial drag" against poor people. Wiley argued that purchase of service was a political plum thrown out by Wilbur Mills, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, to stave off criticism by social work leaders about the harsher aspects of the 1967 amendments by allowing private agencies to "get a little piece of the federal action." Social workers may have deplored the amendments, he said, but they seemed willing to make peace with them fairly quickly and turn their attention to agency priorities rather than the needs of the poor.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁷ Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, p. 22, 150; John Wedemeyer, "Government Agencies and the Purchase of Social Service," in Winogrand, p. 18-19.

⁷⁹⁸ George Wiley, "Advocacy for the Poor," in Winogrand, ed.

From the right came the Nixon Administration. One of the myriad explanations for why Richard Nixon proposed one of the most sweeping welfare reform programs in 1969, the Family Assistance Plan, which proposed to offer a version of a guaranteed national income, was that it promised to eliminate the increasingly elaborate system of social services funded through the federal government. Daniel Patrick Moynihan defined FAP as “an income strategy rather than a services strategy” and argued that the predominant beneficiaries of the investments in social services in the early and mid 1960s had been middle-class professionals rather than the poor themselves. Moynihan delighted Nixon by promising that FAP would “get rid of social workers.” The anti-social work sentiment emanating from the Nixon Administration in 1969 and 1970 worried purchase-of-service planners; one social service administrator observed that those close to the drafters of the FAP reported “great skepticism about social services and what they produce.” While it seems clear that Nixon had great personal antipathy toward social workers, particularly those within the federal welfare bureaucracy, his administration actually presided over the meteoric expansion of federal social service expenditures, much of which was promoted by liberal Nixon appointees within HEW through cost-shifting by purchase of service. Though the Administration eventually put a spending limit on social service grants to states in 1972, it was obvious that the social service sector had assembled enough power to ensure it would not be undermined by the Administration.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁹ On Nixon’s antipathy to social workers, see Walter Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*, 5th ed. (New York: Free Press, 1994), p. 340, 351, Daniel P. Moynihan, *Politics of a Guaranteed Income: The Nixon Administration and the Family Assistance Plan* (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 54-55, Vincent J. Burke and Vee Burke, *Nixon’s Good Deed: Welfare Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 67. On HEW executives in the first Nixon

While social workers were accused of “welfare pimping” by the left and the right, it took Elizabeth Wickenden, now with experience in welfare policy spanning from the New Deal to the Great Society, to note the historic shift that purchase of service had helped initiate. “Virtually unchallenged and undebated,” she observed, “the principle established with the first large-scale federal welfare program, the Federal Emergency Welfare Administration [sic], that public funds should only be expended by public agencies, was quietly repudiated.” Wickenden also discerned a distinct ideological tone emerging from the most recent promotion of purchase of service. While, as discussed above, some liberals viewed nonprofits as a way to circumvent conservative public administrators, conservatives were beginning to see nonprofits, and perhaps even business, as a way to substitute for government more systematically. Wickenden pointed to management consultant Peter Drucker’s *Age of Discontinuity*, which she claimed Nixon had circulated among his aides, as an example of the “euphoric rhetoric of those who see in the nongovernmental agency the means to salvation for the ills of present-day government.”⁸⁰⁰

Conclusion

Viewed from the perspective of established non-profit agencies, the 1960s were both affront and opportunity. The community mental health movement demonstrated that they did not have a lock on generalized therapeutic services, and when challenged by the

Administration, see Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending*, p. 35-42. States and social service organizations made common cause to successfully fight the Administration’s attempts to implement deep restrictions on the types of and eligibility for federal social service subsidies; see Paul Mott, *Meeting Human Needs: The Social and Political History of Title XX* (Columbus, OH: National Conference on Social Welfare, 1976), p. 27-45; Newgent, p. 26.

⁸⁰⁰Elizabeth Wickenden, “Purchase of Care and Services: Effect on Voluntary Agencies,” in Winogrand, p. 42.

joint forces of medical professionals and government funding, voluntary sector social worker faced an uphill fight. Here, as in the New Deal, state expansion created competition for the core service of family service agencies. The challenge had not been framed as a failure of voluntarism; indeed, it was the failure of state institutions to provide humane care that had helped drive the community mental health movement. But as clinics began to move their focus away from the seriously mentally ill to more generalized counseling, their superior professional legitimacy, their more ready access to public funds, and perhaps even the *élan* of a movement made them tough competitors for the clients and funds sought by family agencies.

Nor did family agencies seem welcome within the ambit of social welfare. Excoriated as the symbols of everything that was wrong about the social service system, private welfare's leaders found itself seemingly marginalized as the poverty program gained momentum. Re-inserting themselves into the increasingly crowded field of social service provision meant demonstrating a willingness to modify methods and embrace groups whom they had once shied away from. Project ENABLE offered a chance to prove that the establishment could be rehabilitated, to serve difficult clients, to extend their mission to social action, and to bring the problems of the poor back into the center of their institutional mission.

The fact that ENABLE accomplished few of these goals in any measurable way is not surprising, particularly given the disintegration of many of the high hopes that surrounded the community action program as a whole. But the attacks on the social services, and even their failure to eliminate poverty, did not reduce their prevalence. The ENABLE experience and community action can be seen as a step in the fundamental re-

ordering of the social service sector in general. This was not the democratization that poverty planners had hoped; rather, it was the increasingly blurred line between public and private social provision. As voluntary agencies began to get accustomed to the taste of public money, and as the War on Poverty unleashed a new breed of nonprofit agency into social service delivery, a fundamental tenet of the New Deal Order of “New Alignments” was eroded. Established private welfare agencies, stumbling through the poverty program, would emerge as one of the new faces of a hybrid, public-private system.

As Wickenden feared, such a system, emerging from pragmatic strategies of program expansion as well as more hopeful efforts to bring services closer to the people in need, did make voluntary agencies more dependent on government. But it also inadvertently helped provide the basis for conservative arguments for privatizing government functions that slowly gained ground in the 1970s. The wide array of nonprofit agencies helped cast the illusion that the nonprofit sector was capable of shouldering the burdens of service provision, and could be used as a rationale for cutting back government services—though the crucial role that government funds played in these organizations was largely, and perhaps willfully, ignored. Both public and nonprofit services, moreover, were increasingly subject to managers and management ideas filtering in from the business sector, with increasing stress on efficiency and cost control. The services strategy that drew the voluntary sector back into engaging the poor and the public sector also made them vulnerable to the conservative ideological attacks and cost-cutting in social services that would come into fruition by the early 1980s.

CONCLUSION: A THOUSAND POINTS OF LIGHT?

The 1960s peaked for voluntary family agencies in 1969, but it was race, not the possibilities of purchase of services by the government, that dominated discussions of family agencies. Minority activists took over the annual meeting of the Family Service Association of America in Philadelphia that November. It was one of a series of protests that year at major social welfare gatherings, most notably at the National Conference of Social Work in New York, where protestors held conferees virtually hostage and demanded that the NCSW donate \$35,000 to the National Welfare Rights Organization. The FSAA, anticipating similar protests at its own convention, had called a conference of its Board of Directors and national staff early that year on "Family Service and the Black Experience" to "increase our knowledge of the black experience and our own 'hangups' in relation to it." They resolved to bring minority representatives up to nine in the FSAA's 60-person board. It did not forestall the action in Philadelphia, where minority social work activists declared a "Day of Black Challenge," and presented a list of demands to the FSAA, including an end to studies of blacks by whites, a task force on racism with majority minority representation and a \$75,000 budget, and separate meetings and meeting spaces, as well as travel subsidies, to the national convention. The FSAA agreed to several of the terms, though deferred on the task force, and the next year appointed John Dearman, president of the San Francisco Family Service Association and head of the Black Caucus, as vice-president of the FSAA.⁸⁰¹

⁸⁰¹ Protestors also disrupted the American Association of Social Workers national conference, as well as the American Orthopsychiatric Association, the Council on Social Work Education, and the United Chests and Community Funds. "The Philadelphia Story" *Highlights* (Jan. 1970): p. 31-42; John Ehrenreich, *The*

Like many of the convulsions of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Black Power moment in social work created the climate for change in the leadership of many social welfare institutions, though the level of militancy of 1969 was never repeated. The FSAA was not affected as dramatically as settlement houses, whose clientele was more heavily minority, and whose leadership became dominated by minorities in the 1970s.⁸⁰² Nonetheless, the protests helped diversify the staffs and boards of agencies that had been slow to reflect the composition of their clientele. Some of the new staff members were “paraprofessional” workers, drawn from local communities, to increase connections with local communities and to compensate for the limited supply of minority social workers. Such a move was difficult for family agencies who had invested much in their professional services, as it was for the social work profession as a whole. However, community action programs, held out as the alternative to a seemingly discredited charitable establishment, found themselves facing similar, prosaic problems of maintaining institutional structures, finding clients, and avoiding institutional ossification. These have proved to be endemic challenges to institutionalized social welfare, regardless of its class origins or political orientation.⁸⁰³

From an institutional standpoint, the challenge by minorities ultimately had less impact on family agencies than did the altered terrain of social services created by community mental health, the War on Poverty, and the end of “New Alignments” in

Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 199-206.

⁸⁰² On black challenges to settlement leadership, see Judith Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 207-216.

⁸⁰³ Dan Dodson, “Institutionalized Racism in Social Welfare Agencies,” *Social Welfare Forum* 1970, p. 88-98; Barbara Shannon, “Implications of White Racism for Social Work Practice,” *Social Casework* (May 1970); Henry Freeman, Mary Ellen Hoffman, Winifred Smith, Howard Prunty. “Can a Family Agency Be Relevant to the Urban Scene?” *Social Casework* (Jan. 1970): 12-21.

favor of purchase of service. Many of the vast array of non-profit organizations unleashed by 1960s public policy faced funding shortages shortly after their creation—community mental health centers by the failure of states to take over the initial funding role of the federal government, and community action agencies by increased restrictions, and ultimate elimination, of the program. Despite radically different origins, family service agencies, community mental health agencies, and community action agencies all gravitated toward similar sources of financing, both governmental and voluntary, in providing generalized social services—though with important differences. Community Action agencies tended to focus on more “concrete” services such as job training, Head Start, and other educational programs. Family agencies and community mental health kept their therapeutic core, though family agencies continued to rhetorically emphasize the “family” while community mental health agencies availed themselves of increasing public funds for programs such as substance abuse.

All the agencies studied in detail in this project, in Wilmington, Delaware, in Baltimore, Maryland, and in St. Paul, Minnesota (as well as the Community Service Society of New York City) are all still in existence. In Wilmington, Family Service of Northern Delaware merged in 1992 with the Children’s Bureau of Delaware, a voluntary foster care and adoption agency with a statewide presence, and then with a smaller family counseling service in Seaford, Delaware in 1995, and renamed itself Children and Families First. In Baltimore, Family and Children’s Service expanded to 16 locations in Baltimore City and the surrounding counties, renaming itself Family and Children’s Service of Central Maryland. In St. Paul, the agency changed its name in 1992 from Family Service of St. Paul to simply Family Service, Inc. The two mid-Atlantic agencies

both now have large adoption and foster care programs, and a range of allied supporting services, such as programs for children who have suffered from domestic abuse. Family counseling and family education continue to play general roles, but the tendency has been to move toward more specialized programs and target groups within those general rubrics. Services for the elderly have become more prominent in all the agencies. In St. Paul, which has also retained a family casework core, the agency has moved toward working closer with business to provide services to help deal with employee's domestic problems—ironically, an avenue that family agencies had turned away from during World War Two. The funding mix for the three agencies reflects the nature of their program. For the two agencies with children's programs, public funds predominate, 61 percent in Wilmington and 66 percent in Baltimore, while only 19 percent in St. Paul. United Way contributions count for 15.8 percent of Wilmington's income, 13.9 percent of Baltimore's, and 34 percent of St. Paul's. While the United Way funds are smaller, they are often less targeted and more flexible than the government grants. Wilmington receives nine percent of its funds from fees, Baltimore 11 percent, and St. Paul 28 percent—reflecting the latter's link to local business. All are engaged in a diverse range of human service activities sponsored by a variety of patrons: the voluntary sector, the government, business, and clients themselves.⁸⁰⁴

The national family service agency has re-invented itself more dramatically. The Family Service Association of America, in a joint venture with the Child Welfare League of America, the national association of child welfare agencies, established the Council on

⁸⁰⁴ Children and Families First, *Annual Report 2001* (Wilmington, Del., 2001); Family and Children's Services of Central Maryland, *"Helping People in All Life Stages": 2000 Annual Report* (Baltimore, Md., 2000); Family Service, Inc., *2000 Annual Report* (St. Paul, Minn. 2000).

Accreditation, and transferred their standard-setting functions for local service providers into this agency. The FSAA changed its name to Family Service America in 1993, and then became the Alliance for Children and Families. The Alliance now provides management consulting and resources for nonprofit family agencies. It has also created a for-profit arm, FEI Incorporated, that provides behavioral health services to businesses, and another nonprofit entity, Ways to Work, which receives several million in federal grants to run a low-income family loan program.

Just as the voluntary sector, now a part of an amorphous nonprofit sector, was being drawn closer into a relationship of direct dependence on public funds for major parts of its program in the late 1960s, the merits of voluntarism and other forms of non-governmental action were achieving a new legitimacy in public discourse, particularly among conservative activists. With the perceived failures of “big government” following the Johnson Administration, and with very real crises in poor urban areas, voluntarism was often a panacea for otherwise intractable social policy issues. Peter Drucker argued the case for the “Sickness of Government” in 1969 and made a name for himself as an early advocate of privatizing government services—though his preferred venue at that time was the business world, with nonprofits in second place.⁸⁰⁵ The celebration of voluntarism has usually been paired with such a critique of government action in social welfare, and has surfaced more frequently in political rhetoric and policy prescriptions in the late twentieth century. Ronald Reagan gave rhetorical support to shifting tasks from government to voluntarism, and convened a Task Force on Private Initiatives that was intended to promote private solutions to public needs. George H.W. Bush coined a

⁸⁰⁵ Peter Drucker, “The Sickness of Government,” *Public Interest* (Winter 1969): 3-23.

“Thousand Points of Light” to express the hope that voluntarism could provide the humanity in social service that he believed government could not. Bill Clinton actually presided over the most significant policy implementation of this hope, as the welfare reform act included a “charitable choice” that somewhat expanded the integration of religious organizations into providing welfare services. Finally George W. Bush’s “compassionate conservatism” and its promotion of religious charities subsidized by public social welfare funds would attempt to broaden these relationships and give religious agencies maximum flexibility to mix belief and service.⁸⁰⁶ Though promoters of the voluntary sector have come from a range of ideological positions, from those hoping for an absolute reduction in public social policy to those hoping for a shift in resources to neighborhood control, all have invested in voluntarism a hope to solve the perceived failures of the American welfare regime. Some recent historical scholarship has made the same points.⁸⁰⁷

This study may serve as a reminder that policy makers should be cognizant of the history of voluntary agencies that have had direct experience with public subsidy and with standing in for absent or under-funded public institutions. Though with their own set

⁸⁰⁶ Lester Salamon, *Partners in Public Service: Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 149, 155-156; George H. W. Bush, “State of the Union Address,” Jan. 29, 1991; David Campbell, “Beyond Charitable Choice: The Diverse Service Delivery Approaches of Local Faith-Related Organizations,” *Nonprofit Sector and Voluntary Quarterly* (June 2002): 207-230; “Unlevel Playing Field: Barriers to Participation by Faith-Based and Community Organizations in Federal Service Programs,” White House press release, August 2001, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/unlevelfield1.html>.

⁸⁰⁷ Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1992) has been influential among advocates for subsidy of “faith-based” social welfare, though it has been attacked on historical grounds; see David Hammack’s H-Net review of Olasky at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=3672851041828>. David Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), argues in its conclusion that “the old relationships of voluntary reciprocity and autonomy have slowly given way to paternalistic dependency,” (p. 234) and argues that voluntary mutual-aid associations offered a more intimate and morally stringent alternative to public (or more distant charitable) solutions.

of doubts about the potential dangers of public welfare, voluntary family agencies made peace with the welfare state, and some became ardent advocates of a strong public presence in social welfare. Those directing, and most particularly, those working within voluntary family agencies were aware of the limits of voluntarism in the 1920s, and that awareness was forced on many others by the Depression in the early 1930s. While government expansion was a challenge to these voluntary agencies, it did not sound their death knell, and the move toward offering therapeutic services in the postwar era—as halting as it was—symbolized the potential for a robust vision of government-voluntary interaction. The “demonstration model,” invoked for a century or more by progressive advocates of voluntarism, assumed a legitimate role for both voluntary and state social provision, and, at its best, produced innovations in social policy that were indeed popularized and brought into public policy. Whether such a model inevitably leads to the crowding out of voluntary institutions by government cannot be answered by this study. But there may very well be a life-cycle to institutions, both governmental and voluntary, that have outlived their purpose or have been pushed beyond their capacity, and while they may be mourned, it is not *ipso facto* a tragic loss.

Therapeutic social work has helped meet a rising demand for counseling oriented services in the postwar era, a phenomenon driven by an increasingly prosperous American society, shifts in the structure of families and the anxieties attending those shifts, and the increasing cultural legitimacy of such practices—helped along by the practitioners themselves. It also seems clear that family agencies were part of a “golden age” of therapeutic services that has since gone into decline. This may be a measure of the success, as well as the failure, of the model of work promoted by family service. As it

has become embraced by a wide variety of public and private practitioners, it has become more routinized, and the highly intensive, highly professionalized model of private agency practice has not ultimately won the day. Even private agencies themselves, facing budget crises, have de-emphasized straight casework counseling as their primary offering, and have moved toward a diversified range of services—including a renewed emphasis on family life education, and new interest in group counseling techniques that some agencies began working with during Project ENABLE.

While the voluntary sector has in fact lived up to its “demonstration” rationale at times, the same rationale, and the “New Alignments” period from the New Deal to the Great Society, helped paper over the failings of both private and public welfare. The continuing struggles of family agencies to distinguish themselves from public welfare was not only caused by the historical legacy of these agencies as relief-granting institutions, but also by the persistent weakness of public assistance mechanisms in many states and localities. Most family agencies did, in fact, redirect the bulk of their services to “intangible” giving such as counseling. But it came at a cost, which was their only tentative engagement with the problems of the poorest of the poor, who were often African Americans in the postwar era. Such a path was dictated by the hopes of an expanding public welfare presence and the institutional imperatives of this particular set of voluntary institutions. It was not, however, a particular failing of voluntary institutions, but rather a broader failure of American institutions. And as an ultimately political issue, the most hopeful place to look for change is not in ameliorative institutions but in active political organizations. Arguably, in promoting therapy as a “universal” service remaining connected to the procurement of material goods for the poor whatever its

limitations and connotations of social control, family agencies did pursue a strategy that has helped gain acceptance of a range of long-lasting social policies not stigmatized by an association with a particular class or race.

As historians, this study should remind us that voluntary institutions were not an artifact of the Hoover era, with life breathed into them by late-twentieth century critics of government. They were an active part of social welfare provision, broadly construed, in the New Deal Era, and an important part of the public-private arrangements that made the American welfare regime relatively distinctive in the postwar period. That they receded in importance as part of the financial safety net did not eliminate them as promoters and providers of socially significant services that played a prominent role in shaping thinking about solving the social problems of mid-century America.

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