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I. Introduction

"There are more than 7 million children currently on AFDC rolls. . . .

"These children are the victims of the present system, and through them the system will be perpetuated."[1]

A major fear of many who are concerned with the welfare system is that the system itself tends to create pathology among recipients, and in the case of children, to cause malsocialization. Welfare is said to sap the capacity of recipients for independent action, to damage self-esteem, and to reinforce feelings of personal inadequacy, failure, and worthlessness. Since traits of autonomy, independence, ambition, and coping are supposedly not reinforced during a childhood on welfare, the welfare child seems destined to grow up to become a welfare recipient.

There are a number of problems with these assertions. The chief problem is that there is not much good evidence, one way or another, concerning the effects of the welfare system--as a system--on children in this country. Such assertions do not recognize the limits of existing data and the questionable validity of existing interpretations. Because the consequences of this blindness include the perpetuation of degrading myths concerning people in poverty and the consequent shaping of policy possibly detrimental to their interests, this paper will concern not only the question of adverse effects of the welfare system on children, but also the poverty of relevant research.

There is no problem in finding evidence that beliefs concerning the effects of the welfare system on adults and, through them, on children, are likely to shape policy. I will cite a few examples. Rainwater, in a paper for a congressional study committee, claims that "Having to stay on welfare brings home forcefully the fact that one does not have much chance of significantly improving one's condition in life. . . ."[2] The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry made its formal recommendations to policy-makers on the basis of "our belief that the current welfare system has an adverse effect on the mental health of its recipients"[3] that "the welfare system damages self-esteem, creates a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness, and promotes unhealthy dependancy",[4] and that "the welfare system itself predisposes to unhealthy personal and family development."[5] The legislation establishing the Work Incentive Program, which is designed to get welfare recipients into the labor force, claims that "[T]he example of a working adult in these families will have a beneficial effect on the children in these families."[6]

The evidence for such assertions consists of a surprisingly small number of inconclusive, ill-conceived, or misinterpreted studies of the welfare poor, often buttressed with the mythology that the middle classes in western society hold concerning the "lower classes." This mythology is not flattering to the poor.[7] It is also tenacious, perhaps as much among social scientists as in the population at large--even after two years of critically reading the literature on poverty I find it hard to disabuse myself of some of my middle-class beliefs. For example, it takes an effort of will to drop the view that

aggressiveness of all kinds is much more characteristic of the lower than of the middle class--but it probably isn't.[8] The matter of the quality of relevant research and its interpretation will be described in some detail in the course of this review. By way of an introduction, however, I will describe the general problems that are often seen in this area.[9]

A. Research Problems in Determining Effects of the Welfare System

Ideally, the study of the cumulative effects of any social system calls for longitudinal studies of people as they do or do not pass through the system. But longitudinal studies are expensive and time-consuming and thus are as rare in the poverty literature as they are in other areas. I found only one longitudinal study relevant for the present paper.[10] What is offered in the place of longitudinal studies are retrospective or cross-sectional studies that lack the matched nonrecipient control groups necessary for drawing valid and reliable conclusions. If one takes a group of individuals with a particular characteristic, such as long-term welfare status, and finds factors common to a large proportion of the group, one than has only an hypothesis concerning the cause of this characteristic. If one finds on further analysis that long-term welfare recipients are more flawed in some way than short-term recipients or the population at large, the hypothesis may seem stronger but is not in any sense proved. Long-term recipients represent a small minority of all recipients and may well have been distinctive from other recipients when they first went on welfare. What must be done is to follow a representative sample of all new recipients over time to see if the factors believed to be

fostered by the welfare system actually come to differentiate long-term from short-term recipients. In other words, a prospective research design is needed in order to produce the best evidence for an hypothesis concerning system effects.

Cross-sectional research may, at times, be a satisfactory substitute for prospective research, but one needs to attend carefully in such research to the logic of making valid comparisons and of drawing inferences about causation and outcomes. The record of poverty researchers and reviewers in this respect is not good. One of the most often cited studies, by Langner et al., will serve as an example of the kinds of research problems encountered in the literature. Furthermore, since this study supposedly provides some of the strongest evidence of the destructiveness of the welfare system, it seems worthwhile describing it in detail.[11]

Hoshino, for example, cites this study as having found "that 12 percent of AFDC children had psychiatric disorders, a rate that was three times as high as nonwelfare poor children (4 percent), who had a rate similar to children of higher income families (5 percent). Mistrustful and anxious personalities were heavily represented among the AFDC children". These findings are held to be, in Hoshino's words, among the "consequences--opportunity costs, so to speak--of AFDC policies."[12] Langner et al. explicitly ruled out poverty per se as a cause. They concluded, for various reasons, that "attempts to overcome dependency on welfare should not be concentrated solely on providing income to families in need." In other words, the welfare system, as presently structured, causes welfare children to have "greater

impairment and less healthy personalities."[13] The problems involved in coming to this conclusion are as follows:

Sample limitations. The original sample for Langner's study was, one assumed, well drawn. It included 1034 households in the Manhattan area of New York City. But the group for which results are reported in this 1969 article is a subsample of 400 cases only said to be "roughly representative." However it was drawn (no details are given), the AFDC portion of this subsample is not very representative of the AFDC population in at least one respect--there are far too many two-parent families in the sample. Its representativeness in other respects is not known. Furthermore, the welfare cases (all AFDC) in this subsample number only 25, a very small group on which to make sweeping generalizations.

The effects of the welfare system are inferred from comparisons of welfare and nonwelfare low-income groups in this subsample. These two groups differ in ethnic background, income distribution, and proportion of one-parent families. The first two characteristics are not produced by the welfare system--presumably welfare families have lower-than-welfare incomes when they go on welfare. As to the possibility that the welfare system induces high rates of one-parent families among low-income groups, the evidence is not strong. Although the issue must still be considered an open one, family instability is probably not increased by the availability of generous welfare stipends.[14] At any rate, the very large proportion of one-parent families in Langner's AFDC sample represents mainly eligibility rules for AFDC, not the production of single-parent families by the system even if this happens.

Nonsignificance and misreporting of observed differences. The rates of "psychiatric disorders" cited by Hoshino and others[15] actually are rates for psychotic disorders, one of eight categories of disorders that Langner et al. investigated. The three-fold difference reported represents 12 percent or three cases in the AFDC sample (n = 25), 4 percent or four cases in the nonwelfare low-income sample (n = 101), and 5 percent or 13 cases in the higher-income sample (n = 254). The AFDC difference here clearly could be a chance result. (Statistical significance is not assessed.) There is no difference for personality disorders, another one of the eight categories, but the observed distribution of types of personality disorders within this category varies across groups. The quotation above from Hoshino concerning "mistrustful and anxious" personalities grossly misrepresents this finding--even if it were meaningful. However, only 13 AFDC cases fall into this category, and the distribution of these few cases across 16 subtypes of personality disorders cannot be taken as a reliable guide to the distribution in the population as a whole.

Failure to attend to no-difference results. Of the eight types of disorders for which data were collected, the largest difference is the small one described above for psychotic disorders. The next largest difference is a reversal and the other group comparisons show minute differences or reversals of expectation. The researchers dwell on differences of five and two percent in the expected direction but explain away one reversal and ignore the other results. Similarly, in a separate analysis of "impairment ratings in various functional areas," the researchers find meaning in a very small "average

impairment risk" difference but no meaning in the lack of differences in results for global impairment ratings and assessment of need for immediate psychiatric intervention.

Construction of summary statistics with artifactual elements. Langner et al. found that "impairment of relationship with natural father" was much greater for AFDC children than for other children, which could not be otherwise since father's absence is an important factor in AFDC eligibility. Since this factor yields by far the greatest welfare-nonwelfare difference, it undoubtedly is responsible for the small "average impairment risk" difference found in the combined scores for the various types of impairment.[16]

Failure to consider other relevant factors. Suppose more psychotic children were reliably found among welfare groups than among nonwelfare groups. Rather than concluding that welfare causes psychosis (as well as the various related psychological problems usually attributed to the children's mothers), it is equally if not more reasonable to see this finding as reflecting the fact that babysitters or daycare for problem children are hard to find, thus forcing a poor single mother to seek welfare support rather than employment. More generally, Langner et al. and those who have cited this research ignore such realities, as well as the structure of the labor market that lead many poor single mothers to seek welfare support when other support is unavailable. They know nothing of such things as the reason these people sought welfare support to start with or even how long they were on welfare. And since the average

stay is less than two years it is highly unlikely that the system itself could wreak such damage as they thought they saw.

Biased evaluations. Whatever seems to differentiate AFDC children from other children is bad, according to these researchers, unless it's a reversal of expectations (such as "reactive disorders"), in which case the characteristic is held to be unimportant or proves that nonwelfare children are healthier. The implied characterization of welfare children and their mothers as psychiatrically impaired and in great need of a father in the home (as Langner et al. explicitly state), is grossly unfair to these families. In the absence of any good evidence to the contrary, it is just as plausible to view AFDC families as superior to others, given the great problems faced by poor husbandless mothers struggling for self-support and dignity in a world characterized by sexism, racism, and lack of opportunity for those who have not been given the educational and economic benefits afforded the rest of society. Available evidence suggests that this would be a fairer stereotype than that proposed by Langner et al.[17]

Before turning to a review of what little we actually know about the effects of the welfare system, I can offer at least one model of what good research might look like. O. D. Duncan, in an article that attacks the "vicious cycle of poverty" theory, undertook to compare the relative effects of "inheritance of race" versus "inheritance of poverty" as explanations for low occupational attainment among those who grew up in poverty. Using a flexible model (one which can be reworked extensively until it adequately reflects the data), placing relatively little reliance on unquestioned assumptions,

and paying strict attention to the logic of drawing inferences, Duncan came to the conclusion that it is much more important for a child to have parents of the "right" skin color than to have middle-class parents if one wants to avoid a high risk of the child ending up as an adult with low economic status.[18]

II. The Empirical Findings

A. Multigeneration Poverty Families: How Numerous Are They?

One of the chief errors in the Workfare assertion quoted at the beginning of this paper is that study after study turns up only a minority of welfare recipients whose parents were long-time recipients. The largest estimates are around 40 percent, but these figures are for recipient families in which either the father or the mother came from families that ever had received welfare.[19] Note the underlined qualifications. A brief stint or two on welfare is not likely to have the strong effects that welfare is alleged to have on children. The Greenleigh study is reported to have found that only slightly more than 30 percent of their Washington state sample came from families which had been on welfare for more than a brief time. Other figures are lower. Handler and Hollingsworth found that about one-third of their sample of AFDC mothers said their parents had received some type of welfare aid. Among white recipients, those who had had previous periods on welfare were twice as likely to have had parents who had been on welfare. However they also state (without giving proportions) that recipients' parents had usually only spent "a brief time on

welfare." Podell reported that only about 15 percent of his New York City sample of welfare mothers came from families who had been on welfare.[20]

There are several problems in the interpretation of these studies--to say nothing of the problem of the reliability of these findings. Kriesberg points out that the parents of present welfare recipients grew up in the depression.[21] During those years 27 percent of the nation were below the poverty line and 20 percent were on welfare at some time or another--in some states this figure was 40 percent. On the basis of history alone, then, one would expect that many who were and will be poor in the second half of the century will have been raised in families that were on welfare in the depression. Furthermore, as Durbin points out, the fact of changes in eligibility standards and various other structural modifications in the welfare system which have led to increases in the size of welfare rolls means that intergenerational dependency automatically increases from one generation until the next.[22] In other words, a control group of nonrecipients might show similarly high rates of a family welfare history.

Baumheier, in a study with the appropriate control group, reports findings that support this model. About one-quarter of his New York City welfare sample had been raised in families that had received public assistance as compared to one-seventh of those in a nonwelfare sample from the same area. The difference is in the expected direction but Baumheier concluded that it was too small to "suggest a significant association between adult and childhood dependency." Furthermore, in his 400 family sample he found no third generation welfare recipients (e.g., recipients whose parents and grandparents had received welfare).[23]

Baumheier also found no differences in the characteristics of first and second generation welfare recipients and concluded that, generally, family history should not be considered to be an explanatory factor in welfare status. Kriesberg came to a similar conclusion.[24] He found that the economic fortunes of the welfare mothers in his sample seemed to be largely determined by contemporary circumstances rather than by background factors. The validity of these conclusions is strongly supported by the one prospective study available for this review. Dickinson found that participants in the Michigan panel study of income dynamics were only 5 percent more likely to go on welfare if their parents had been on welfare than participants who had not come from welfare families. According to Dickinson, this difference is too small to be reliable. She also concluded that parents' welfare status is not predictive of children's welfare status when they reach adulthood.[25]

B. Childrearing Practices and Parenting Among Welfare Mothers

Life on welfare. Many of the discussions of the deleterious effects of welfare on children rest on assumptions about the quality of life on welfare--e.g., degrading contacts with welfare mothers, loss of privacy as a result of welfare eligibility investigations, denial of normal sexual activity to unmarried mothers because of puritannical welfare rules, decay of the capacity for independent action and of the ability to cope, reinforcement of feelings of personal inadequacy, failure and worthlessness, and so on. The assumption is that any woman trapped in such a dreadful situation is unlikely to be a good mother.[26]

The relevant evidence indicates, however, that life on welfare is not as dreadful for most families as the popular view holds. Handler and Hollingsworth found that the way the welfare system worked in Wisconsin was reasonably acceptable to their sample of women who had been on AFDC for six months or more.[27] The bureaucracy of welfare had touched their lives by and large only financially. They had not been bothered much by system requirements at intake nor by intrusive caseworkers in their day-to-day lives, nor were they helped much more than financially. Similar findings are reported in a number of other studies.[28] These studies involve widely varying welfare systems and welfare populations. Some of them find somewhat more complaints about the system than others, and some states may provide more nonfinancial services than others--mainly such things as medical help--however, they suggest that the majority of welfare recipients probably have no more than a single contact with the welfare system a month at the very most (in addition to receiving their check).

There is no evidence that these recipients are uncomplaining because of a resigned acceptance of the system. The great majority report feeling somewhat stigmatized or at least being bothered by being on welfare. But there is also no evidence that feelings of stigma become pathological; Cole and Lejeune purport to find that some welfare mothers exhibit "legitimation of failure" through illness, but even if their inference is justified, actually only a small proportion of their sample is so affected.[29] In summary, I have not been able to find any reports of systematically gathered and analyzed data which indicate that welfare touches recipients' lives in consistently

destructive and demoralizing ways except insofar as it provides too little for recipients to live on. If the welfare system is not intrusive, it seems unreasonable, then, to assume that the system turns its clients into poor mothers. This doesn't mean that the system is all that good, only that it may have seriously negative consequences for a small minority but not the majority.

Comparisons of long-term and short-term welfare mothers. A number of studies have drawn comparisons of long-term and short-term welfare mothers, testing the hypothesis that welfare has produced pathology of one sort or another among the former. These studies, whether they show support for this hypothesis or not, share a common defect. They are all static comparisons of groups that unquestionably differ in more ways than time on welfare. Long-term recipients constitute a minority of those on welfare at any one time and they are more likely than short-term recipients to have some disability or problem which makes it improbable that they will be able to leave welfare in the near future. They may well have been distinctive in other ways when they first went on welfare--ways that might be predictive of length of stay on welfare. In other words, finding that long-term welfare recipients are especially flawed in some way doesn't necessarily indicate that welfare caused the flaw.

In light of the low probability that long-term recipients will ever get off welfare, it is perhaps surprising that most personality studies don't show them to be significantly different from short-term recipients. I found only two such studies. Phillips found that long-term recipients have higher "anomie" scores and Kramm found that "rehabilitation" (e.g., training which is supposed to correct

work-related pathology and low skill levels) is less successful with long-term than with short-term recipients.[30] As argued above, these findings don't necessarily indicate that the welfare system causes women to become alienated and normless, etc., or that recipients become less "rehabilitable" over time on welfare. In contrast, a number of findings of no differences (or even reverse-of-expectation differences) in various psychological and behavioral characteristics might be taken as positive evidence that welfare actually has almost no negative effects on its clients' personalities.[31] These studies show that long-term clients are not more fatalistic in their view of life than short-term clients, not more likely to be nonparticipants in society, not less supportive of the work ethic, not less self-accepting or responsible, and so on. Findings of no difference between groups are hard to get published in social science journals. We might guess, then, that there are more negative findings than those listed above. In summary, it is unlikely that welfare mothers suffer from any particular pathology that will make them worse mothers than others.

Welfare mothers as parents.[32] A number of researchers--particularly those with a Freudian orientation--have seen great pathology among poor families, particularly mother-headed families.[33] It is, apparently, very difficult for middle-class observers to see most poor families as generally healthy when the observers are working with problem families who are poor. For example, Polansky et al. found that "only a handful of the [poor Appalachian women they] got to know in depth might be identified as neglectful mothers," but go on to ask "What

causes marginal child caring and child neglect? [It] is doubtless a phenomenon of poverty."[34] Looff also provides an example of the tendency to assume that the nondistinguishing characteristic of poverty among the poor families they worked with caused the pathological conditions they saw.[35] There seems to be a natural tendency to take the most highly visible, vivid, poignant or arresting cases as general models. But the use of vignettes and snapshots, however accurately and insightfully described, lies in exemplification, not proof. The evidence is that marginal child caring and child neglect is probably not a phenomenon of poverty--Polansky et al. might well have been able to write a very similar book if they had used a sample of neglectful middle-class mothers.[36]

Generally, studies using representative samples of the welfare and nonwelfare population do not find welfare mothers to be relatively bad at parenting--they may even be relatively good mothers by middle-class standards. With one exception, studies which examine AFDC mothers as parents in comparison with nonwelfare mothers either show no significant differences[37] or suggest that AFDC may attract women who are likely to be better mothers than other poor women.[38] AFDC mothers have as high or higher aspirations for their children than do other low-income mothers.[39] Studies comparing samples of poor single mothers (with a large proportion on welfare) versus poor married mothers support these conclusions. The evidence suggests, in fact, that women on AFDC try to do what's best for their children rather than suggesting that AFDC status is an index of noncaring motherhood.[40]

Other studies concerning the quality of AFDC parenting also come to the general conclusion that AFDC status does not bode ill for children. Burgess and Price found low rates of child abuse and neglect and also noted that the AFDC grant was used primarily for the benefit of the child in 96 percent of the cases. Burnside found that children in AFDC families got more medical care and had better health and fewer emotional problems than children in families that applied for aid but were turned down. Kriesberg found evidence that the husbandless mothers in his sample (half of whom were on welfare) exerted more pressure for good school performance--with likelihood of getting results--than married low-income mothers. Berger and Simon found that children from one-parent homes are more likely to perceive their parents as wanting them to go to college than children from two-parent homes. Hill cites nine studies by five different research groups that concern children's psychological health in black female-headed households--many of which were undoubtedly welfare households. Hill's conclusion was that while welfare and single parenthood are indices of a difficult life for children, these households are seldom found to be destructive of children's psychological health.[41]

The one exception in this trend of no-difference results in comparisons of welfare and nonwelfare mothers is a study by Hess and Shipman.[42] This study used four samples: college-educated mothers, high school graduate mothers, and nonhigh school graduate mothers on welfare, and nonhigh school graduate mothers not on welfare. These women were all black. The study concentrated first on the recorded verbal interview behavior of the mothers. The majority of measures showed the college-educated women to be rather different from

the others, with mainly minor differences among the working class samples. Some reversals of expectation showed the welfare mothers to be more like the high school graduates in verbal style than were the non-high school graduates not on welfare. The only measures showing welfare mothers to be possibly significantly different from nonwelfare lower-class mothers involved abstract and person-oriented versus status-oriented responses to a hypothetical child's school problem. (Although person-orientation is held to be a negative characteristic of the poor by some writers, here it is positive and most characteristic of the nonpoor.) No estimation is made of the statistical significance of the findings, so estimation of their significance can only be based on the relative size of observed average differences--those of most interest for this paper are not outstandingly large.

The second focus of the study was on the four year old children's performance. Welfare children did relatively poorly on two sorting tasks, but better than lower-class children on a design reproduction task. Welfare mothers were the most persistent and rewarding coaches, a finding which the authors resist recognizing, although the differences here are no smaller than differences seen as highly significant with other measures.

Hess, in a 1964 article, indicated that the findings as a whole reflected something seriously wrong with the welfare system.[43] But an interpretation much closer to the data is simply that black mothers of various statuses vary in verbal behavior and in task interactions with their children. If the observed differences are reliable, the significant gaps would seem to occur mainly between the college-educated

and noncollege-educated samples, and not all trends show the former to be clearly superior. The authors' own conclusions are much more alarming but they are not well buttressed by the reported data--several points made in reference to the Langner article apply here.[44] The apparently significant differences in the expected direction between welfare mothers or children and the others are balanced--perhaps even outweighted--by reversals of expectation. Most importantly, perhaps, the welfare-nonwelfare differences are not very great; whatever the interpretation, this study does not show any <u>great</u> deficiencies among welfare mothers relative to other poor mothers. Furthermore, the general trend in other studies comparing welfare and nonwelfare mothers casts some doubt on the valdity of Hess's fear that he is seeing the pernicious results of the welfare system.

This is not to deny that families on welfare are apt to be families with a lot of troubles. Burgess and Price describe at length what these kinds of problems were for families in 1960. (Little may have changed since then for this kind of family.) But these were not problems caused by the welfare system--many of them caused the need for welfare in the first place. Furthermore, Burgess and Price admit that they cannot even estimate problem incidence in their sample. They just think "it is likely" that "a large number" of these families need extensive social services if they are to realize "a stable family life."[45] Given the lack of differences found between families receiving AFDC and other families, perhaps the same conclusion applies to nonwelfare and middle-class families.

C. Pathology Among Poor Children

According to Zurcher and Greene:

> "Chronic official dependency upon welfare institutions can provide physcial sustenance but perhaps at a psychological price that further bankrupts self-esteem. A legacy of hopelessness and anger may be passed from parent to child along with a rigid and inadequate set of skills with which to 'make out in this lousy world,' and the cycle of poverty is thus perpetuated."[46]

We have seen that an intergenerational cycle of welfare dependency may not exist, and that welfare mothers may be rather good mothers, but just how normal and mentally or morally healthy do children in welfare families seem to be? Are they indeed destined, if not for perpetual welfare dependency, at least for poverty by reason of personal inadequacy?

After a comprehensive and critical review of the literature on social class and the socialization process, Zigler found that while there are perhaps some reliable class-related trends in childrearing practices, "the mean difference between populations was so small, compared with the great overlap in the distributions and the large spread of each distribution, that the discovered differences were often relatively trivial in predictive and explanatory power."[47] Furthermore, Zigler points out, "All too rare are studies in which class was related to child-rearing practices which in turn were related to later behavior of the individuals who had actually been subjected to these practices."[48] But this is just the kind of study which is necessary to prove or disprove the hypothesis that welfare dependency is transmitted from one generation to the next. None of the studies I found fit Zigler's prescription for definitive studies. The study by Langner et al. described above is one of the most often cited studies in support of

this hypothesis.[49] The findings, however, do not reliably show any significant difference between welfare and nonwelfare low-income children, nor even much difference between children from low-income and higher-income families; it is not, in short, a study which supports the intergenerational pathology hypothesis.[50]

The most striking evidence relevant here is also the most convincing in terms of suggesting that the class-related intergenerational pathology hypothesis be abandoned. This evidence comes from two large scale surveys replicated over a ten year period. In a 1950 study of a nationwide sample of closed AFDC cases, Blackwell and Gould found slight evidence of antisocial behavior.[51] To the contrary, what they saw was evidence of real accomplishment in the face of great handicaps, with the great majority of AFDC families functioning relatively well under hardship. This study was repeated by Burgess and Price in 1960 with substantially the same results.[52] They found that the incidence of juvenile delinquency and criminal behavior among AFDC children remained far below the national average in 1960 even though it increased in the ten year period, as the national average had. While they acknowledge some problems in the reliability of their data, they contend that the absolute observed level was so low as to constitute in itself evidence for their conclusion. Another study by Greenleigh Associates in Chicago in 1960 came up with similar findings which support Burgess and Price's conclusion.[53] Palmore reports that welfare status was related to child delinquency rates in a sample of low-income families but on examination he found the difference to be the spurious result of sample differences. In addition he found that the number

of delinquent acts and delinquency rates were not related to the number of years on welfare.[54]

In contrast to these studies there is one study that yields strong results going counter to the trend seen in this review. This study, by Levinson, involved a search of public records for official histories of family welfare status over a twenty-seven year period (1939-1966) and of behavior problems over a two year period (1964-1966) of all adolescents in a medium-size urban city in the South.[55] The behavior problems for which data were gathered are school dropout, delinquency, school discipline, premarital pregnancy, teen-age marriage and low school aptitude and achievement. Levinson found for black and white groups, both sexes, across four levels of income, and for both two-parent and one-parent families, that AFDC children had substantially more problems than non-AFDC children. Children from families which had received assistance for more than five years had the most problems. Children from families who had applied for assistance but had not received it also had relatively high problem rates, but there is enough difference between these children and AFDC children to keep alive the question of AFDC as an index of pathology. Some of the data could suffer from class biases in reporting or other artifacts, but the findings are too consistent across problems and groups for an explanation in terms of error.

There are a number of characteristics of this study which differentiate it from other studies cited in this review. The chief one is that the unidentified southeastern community studied is in a state with very low AFDC support levels, which means it is probably one of the poorer Southern states. Levinson's findings cannot be

dismissed but when weighed against findings from the national surveys cited above it is apparent that they are not likely to be generalizable.

Burgess and Price, while finding a low level of antisocial behavior, did find what they considered to be an alarmingly high school dropout rate.[56] Although Levinson found that the dropout rate of AFDC children was higher than the dropout rate of nonwelfare children, Palmore found that it was only marginally higher (47 percent of the AFDC sample versus 38 percent of the nonwelfare sample).[57] Berger and Simon found that children from single-parent homes (many of which were probably welfare homes) were doing better in school than children from low-income, two-parent homes, and perceived their parents as wanting and expecting them to do well and to go to college.[58]

Another type of study of AFDC children concerns their personality traits and life aspirations. Fox found that neither welfare status nor years on welfare were significantly related to a composite measure of "socialization, maturity, responsibility, and interpersonal structuring of value," nor to the components of this measure. Some of the observed correlations are quite high, although not statistically significant, but some of them are the reverse of what stereotype might predict. Generally, Fox found that welfare status was simply not a predictor of what he viewed as maturity among his sample of young male adolescents.[59]

Goodwin studied black adolescents who came from welfare and nonwelfare families. He reports that those who had spent nearly all their lives on welfare did not differ in work orientation from other black youths. When asked if they would work if they had money from elsewhere, poor and nonpoor alike tended to say yes. No differences

were found in life aspirations, acceptance of quasi-illegal activities (such as hustling, gambling and running numbers) as a way to make a living, the value placed on a good education, desire to work beyond a need for money, and desire for training to improve earning ability. Young men from long-term welfare families endorsed the work ethic as strongly as young black men from families that had escaped the ghetto and more strongly than young men coming from ghetto families that were recent entrants onto welfare.[60]

There are a number of findings in Goodwin's study which are subject to differing interpretations. The young men who came from welfare families tended to rate welfare as a more acceptable means of support than those from nonwelfare families. It might be supposed that this reflects the expected acceptance of dependency but the pattern of results on the whole also suggests that rated acceptability may simply reflect closeness to need for welfare support. Black families who had moved from the ghetto rated welfare support as more acceptable than did white families with similar incomes who had probably had much less experience with the need for welfare, either for themselves or for acquaintances. A number of other details in the findings suggest that the rated acceptability of welfare reflects a rational acceptance of something necessary for survival rather than resignation to dependency. Welfare acceptability is negatively related to the acceptability of quasi-illegal activities as a means of support by young men from long-term welfare families. That is, welfare does not appear to be regarded as a form of hustling by these young men. Those from welfare families place a higher value on things like a nice place

to live and a well paid job than young men from nonwelfare families. Given the economic situation of the former, this finding could be taken as a reflection of a greater desire to better themselves economically. In fact more of those from welfare families were employed than those from nonwelfare families.

Young men from welfare families also more strongly endorsed items concerning the importance of the financial rewards from work and of luck and good connections as a means of getting ahead in the world. These items were grouped in a single scale on the basis of a factor analysis that Goodwin had done for a subset of his data. Goodwin reasoned that the emphasis on money in four of the items indicated "lack of confidence about ability to earn sufficient money through work . . ." and that the items on luck and good connections as a means of getting ahead reflected "uncertainty about the effectiveness of effort."[61] However, there is no evidence in the data that the interpretations here are valid, and since the cluster consists of two distinct themes, neither of which directly concerns confidence, the safest interpretation is that the observed clustering is an artifact and would not appear in analyses of other sets of data. Thus Goodwin's conclusion that young men from welfare families "are much less confident about their efforts leading to job success and much more willing to accept welfare if unable to earn enough money" is clearly not warranted--and, I might add, oddly illogical in this otherwise excellent study.[62] In fact, endorsement of this work-for-money, luck-counts cluster is positively correlated with endorsement of the work ethic, life aspirations, and acceptability of welfare, and more so for young men from welfare families than those from nonwelfare families. Rather than reflecting

lack of confidence, on the part of the former, these results may reflect instead a greater desire to better themselves economically.

Schiller points out that AFDC children suffer from "grossly inferior occupational mobility" but that what accounts for it is not their parents' status or low aspirations for them while they were growing up but the immediate situation the youths themselves face.[63] This was the conclusion that O. D. Duncan reached in the model analysis cited above: The burden faced by black youths is the burden of racism more than the burden of inadequate socialization.[64] Furthermore, it has been argued by radical economists and others[65] that the finding that poor children suffer from a variety of educational deficits does not adequately explain their poor performance in the job market when they come of working age. In short, personal inadequancy of any sort is not likely to provide a satisfactory explanation of failure to prosper among offspring of welfare families.

This is not to say that poverty and the attendant disadvantages of poverty such as poor schools, dangerous neighborhoods, poor health, etc., do not adversely affect children as well as adults. I assume they do, but this discussion is directed to a particular kind of effect: that of economic dependency on welfare support, as a characteristic of family of origin, on the psychological health of children and young adults. Some psychological investigations tend to support the conclusions that poverty has some serious effects on the psychological health of those who live in it or grow up in it. It is beyond the scope of this paper to review the relationship of poverty to psychological variables. Various careful reviews lead one to conclude

that the relationship is not simple.[66] Among the effects of sinking into poverty may be apathy, despair and antisocial behavior--for some but not all.[67] However, what is not found in the literature is evidence that sinking into poverty or growing up in poverty results in irreversible psychological damage. The balance of the evidence points to the conclusion that poverty and welfare dependency as family characteristics are not predictive of the ruination of children. Even for those children who appear to be harmed by their environment of hardship and, perhaps, despair, psychological status in childhood is unlikely to be a good predictor of psychological status in adulthood. Skolnick, in a commentary on the longitudinal Berkeley study of a panel followed from childhood into adulthood noted that the predictions made about adult functioning were wrong in two-thirds of the cases. She wondered, naturally, "How could a group of competent psychologists have been so mistaken?"[68] Her answer is relevant for the prediction of their functioning of children reared in poverty:

> "Foremost, the researchers had tended to overestimate the damaging effects of early troubles of various kinds. . . . Data on the experience of [normal subjects who may have experienced childhood difficulties] demonstrated the error of assuming that similar childhood conditions affect every child the same way. Indeed, many instances of what looked like severe pathology to the researchers were put to constructive use by the subjects. . . ."[69]

A parallel commentary on "the deficit hypothesis" view of ethnic and social class differences can be found in Cole and Bruner.[70] This hypothesis "rests on the assumption that a community under conditions

of poverty . . . is a disorganized community, and this disorganization expresses itself in various forms of deficit."[71] These two researchers emphasize not only the unproven nature of the hypothesis itself but also the great need to incorporate an analysis of situations and their effects into the social and psychological model of the condition of being poor or disadvantaged. Looking at a wide range of available data, they find that "cultural differences reside more in differences in the situation to which different cultural groups apply their skills than to differences in the skills possessed by the groups in question."[72]

III. Conclusion

The evidence does not support the contention that the welfare system makes children into permanently dependent and pathology-ridden people. It probably doesn't weaken their moral fiber any more than any other social institution to which people are required to adjust or any more than poverty itself. The present welfare system does little to help the poor beyond supporting them financially with the possible exception of training opportunities which have affected only a small proportion of poor people.[73] Many among the poor appear to the secure middle-class observer to be irresponsible, apathetic, without motivation, and so on. Perhaps this reflects adaptation to the environment in which they are observed, an environment which is chaotic and depriving and which leaves them powerless to better their lives. It may also reflect some inability among middle-class observers to understand what they see. Behavior develops in specific environments and tends to

change as the environment changes. This line of reasoning is relevant to the assumption that welfare is damaging. If we assume that people generally are in a continuing process of adaptation to a changing environment, there is no reason to assume that new adaptations become impossible once people sink as low as they can go on the economic scale. Vance and Wilson, after considering the disabling effects of poverty from distinct vantage points, concluded that such effects may be reversible by a change for the better in the situation.[74] Most of the problems peculiar to poor people stem from their present economic status. Welfare status should be regarded as, at the worst, only one of the unwelcome aspects of poverty, not as a cause of disability.

NOTES

[1]U.S., President's Domestic Council, Workfare: Reforming the Welfare System (Washington, D.C.: President's Domestic Council, 1971), (PrEx 15.2: W89).

[2]Lee Rainwater, "Poverty, Living Standards, and Family Well-Being," in U.S., Congress, Joint Economic Committee, Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy, Studies in Public Welfare, paper no. 12, part II, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 210 (Y4.Ec7: W45/paper 12/pt. 2).

[3]Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, "The Welfare System and Mental Health," GAP Report 8, no. 85 (1973): 347.

[4]Ibid., p. 352.

[5]Ibid.

[6]S. Gold, "The Failure of the Work Incentive (WIN) Program," University of Pennsylvania Law Review 119, no. 1 (1971): 487.

[7]Colin Cameron, Attitudes of the Poor and Attitudes Toward the Poor: An Annotated Bibliography (Madison: Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin, 1975). U.S., Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social and Rehabilitation Service, Welfare Myths vs. Facts, (SRS 71-127) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), (HE 17.2: W45/2). Joe R. Feagin, "America's Welfare Stereotypes," Social Science Quarterly 52 (March 1972): 921-933. Leonard Goodwin, "Middle-Class Misperceptions of the High-Life Aspirations and Strong Work Ethic Held by the Welfare Poor," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 43, no. 4 (1973): 454-464. Elizabeth Herzog, "Facts and Fictions About the Poor," Monthly Labor Review 92 (February 1969): 42-49. John B. Williamson, "Beliefs About the Welfare Poor," Sociology and Social Research 58 (January 1974): 163-175; idem, "Beliefs About the Motivation of the Poor and Attitudes Toward Poverty Policy," Social Problems 21, no. 5 (1974): 634-648.

[8]See Howard S. Erlanger, "The Empirical Status of the Subculture of Violence Thesis," Social Problems 22, no. 2 (1974): 280-292; idem, "Social Class and Corporal Punishment in Childrearing: A Reassessment," American Sociological Review 39, no. 1 (1974): 68-75.

[9]For a comprehensive description of the quality of the general literature on poverty see Jacqueline Macaulay, "A Skeptic's Guide to the Literature on Poverty," Notes and Comments Series (Madison: Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin, December, 1974).

[10]James N. Morgan et al., Five Thousand American Families--Patterns of Economic Progress (Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1974). This study relies on data from the Michigan panel study of income dynamics, a massive research project which may yield more relevant analyses in the future.

[11]Thomas S. Langner et al., "Psychiatric Impairment in Welfare and Non-Welfare Children," Welfare in Review 7 (March/April 1969): 10-21.

[12]G. Hoshino, "ADFC as Child Welfare," in Children and Decent People, ed. Alvin L. Schoor (New York: Basic Books, 1972), pp. 113-141.

[13]Langner, "Psychiatric Impairment," p. 21.

[14]Jacqueline Macaulay, "Poor Single Mothers, Market Work and Welfare," Unpublished paper (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Institute for Research on Poverty, 1975).

[15]Hoshino, "AFDC as Child Welfare," p. 124. See also Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, "The Welfare System," pp. 341-375.

[16]Langner, "Psychiatric Impairment," pp. 10-21.

[17]Macaulay, "Poor Single Mothers."

[18]Otis Dudley Duncan, "Inheritance of Poverty or Inheritance of Race?" in On Understanding Poverty, ed. Daniel P. Moynihan (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

[19]Margaret E. Burgess and Daniel O. Price, An American Dependency Challenge (Chicago: American Public Welfare Association, 1963). Greenleigh Associates, Inc., Public Welfare Poverty-Prevention or Perpetuation? A Study of the State of Washington (New York: Greenleigh Associates, 1960).

[20]Joel Handler and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth, The "Deserving Poor": A Study of Welfare Administration (Chicago: Markham, 1971), p. 59. Lawrence Podell, Families on Welfare in New York City (New York: Center for the Study of Urban Problems, Graduate Division, Bernard M. Baruch College, City University of New York, 1968).

[21]Louis Kriesberg, Mothers in Poverty: A Study of Fatherless Families (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970).

[22]Elizabeth F. Durbin, Welfare Income and Employment: An Economic Analysis of Family Choice (New York: Praeger, 1969).

[23]Edward C. Baumheier, "Intergenerational Dependency: A Study of Public Assistance in Successive Generations" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1971). See Dissertation Abstracts 32/03-A: 1661. Same data reported by Greenleigh Associates, Inc., A Pilot Study of Intergenerational Dependency in New York City (New York: Greenleigh Associates, 1969).

[24]Kriesberg, Mothers in Poverty.

[25]K. Dickinson, "Transfer Income," in Five Thousand American Families--Patterns of Economic Progress, ed. J.N. Morgan et al. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1974).

[26]See for example Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, "The Welfare System," p. 341-375. Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children, Social Change and the Mental Health of Children (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). L. A. Zurcher and A. E. Green, From Dependency to Dignity: Individual and Social Consequences of a Neighborhood House (New York: Behavioral Publications, 1969).

[27]Handler and Hollingsworth, The "Deserving Poor".

[28]Feagin, "America's Welfare Stereotypes," p. 921-933. N. C. Lawrence and V. W. Collester, The Urban AFDC Family (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Family and Children Services, 1970). Michael H. Phillips, "The Impact of the Declaration Procedure Upon the Perceptions and Attitudes of Mothers Receiving AFDC" (D.S.W. diss., Columbia University, 1972). See Dissertation Abstracts 33/05-A: 2505. Podell, Families on Welfare.

[29]Stephen Cole and Robert Lejeune, "Illness and the Legitimation of Failure," American Sociological Review 37 (June 1972): 347-356. Handler and Hollingsworth, The "Deserving Poor". Patrick M. Horan and Patricia Lee Austin, "The Social Bases of Welfare Stigma," Social Problems 21, no. 5 (1974): 648-657. Edward M. Optom, Factors Associated With Employment Among Welfare Mothers (Berkeley: The Wright Institute, 1971).

[30]Phillips, "The Impact of the Declaration Procedure." Elizabeth R. Kramm, "Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Public Assistance Recipients: A Cooperative Demonstration," Welfare in Review 8 (March/April 1970): 11-23.

[31]G. Carson, "The Self-Concept of Welfare Recipients," Personnel and Guidance Journal 45, no. 5 (1967): 424-428. Leonard Goodwin, Do the Poor Want to Work? A Social-Psychological Study of Work Orientations (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1972). Handler and Hollingsworth, The "Deserving Poor". Paul R. Kimmel, Identification and Modification of the Social-Psychological Correlates of Economic Dependency (Washington, D.C.: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1966). [This study was also reported in Norman C. Weissberg, "Intergenerational Welfare Dependency: A Critical Review," Social Problems 18 (Fall 1970): 257-274. An abstract can be found in Poverty and Human Resources Abstracts II, no. 5: 49]. Helene Levens, "Organizational Affiliation and Powerlessness: A Case Study of the Welfare Poor," Social Problems 16 (Summer 1968): 18-32. Oliver C. Moles, Jr., "Child Training Practices Among Low Income Families," Welfare in Review 3, no. 12 (1965): 1-19; idem, "Predicting Use of Public Assistance: An Empirical Study," Welfare in Review 7 (November/December 1969): 13-19.

[32]The text of a number of studies cited in this section contains interpretations and summaries which are at variance with the points for which they are cited here. The discussion above of problems of method, samples, inference, etc., applies to these. They are Seymour Parker and Robert J. Kleiner, "Characteristics of Negro Mothers in Single-Headed Households," Journal of Marriage and the Family 28 (November 1966): 507-513. Norman A. Polansky, Robert D. Borgman, and Christine DeSaix, Roots of Futility (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972). Robert C. Stone and Fredric T. Schlamp, Welfare and Working Fathers: Low-Income Family Life Styles (Lexington, Mass.: Heath Lexington Books, 1971).

[33]Catherine S. Chilman, "Child Rearing and Family Relationship Patterns of the Very Poor," Welfare in Review 3, no. 1 (1965): 9-19.

[34]Polansky, Borgman, and DeSaix, Roots of Futility, p. 6.

[35]David H. Looff, Appalachia's Children: The Challenge of Mental Health (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1971).

[36]Polansky, Borgman, and DeSaix, Roots of Futility.

[37]Greenleigh Associates, Inc., Facts, Fallacies, and Future: A Study of the Aid to Dependent Children Program of Cook County, Illinois (New York: Greenleigh Associates, 1960). Reported in Kriesberg, Mothers in Poverty and H. Miller, "Characteristics of AFDC Families," Social Service Review 39, no. 4 (1965): 399-409. H. Lewis, "Child Rearing Among Low Income Families," in Poverty in America, eds. L. Ferman, J. Kornbluh, and H. Haber (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965). Polansky, Bergman, and DeSaix, Roots of Futility. Stone and Schlamp, Welfare and Working Fathers.

[38]See B. Burnside, "Report on Pilot Study of Families with Dependent Children: Continued and Closed Cases, Denied and Accepted Applications," Report to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Described in M. Lowenthal, Work and Welfare: An Overview (Boston: Institute of Human Sciences, 1971). Kimmel, Identification and Modification. Moles, "Child Training Practices," idem, "Predicting Use of Public Assistance."

[39]Moles, "Child Training Practices." See also reviews by Goodwin, Do the Poor Want to Work? Bradley R. Schiller, "Empirical Studies of Welfare Dependency" Journal of Human Resources 8 (Supplement 1973): 19-32.

[40]A. S. Berger and W. Simon, "Black Families and the Moynihan Report: A Research Evaluation," Social Problems 22, no. 2 (1974); 145-161. Beverly Duncan and Otis D. Duncan, "Family Stability and Occupational Success," Social Problems 16 (Winter 1969): 273-285. Kriesberg, Mothers in Poverty. Parker and Kleiner, "Characteristics of Negro Mothers." L. Rosen, "Matriarchy and Lower Class Negro Male Delinquency," Social Problems 17 (Fall 1969): 175-188. See also reviews by Andrew Billingsley, "Black Family Structure: Myths and Realities," in U.S., Congress, Joint Economic Committee, Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy, Studies in Public Welfare, paper no. 12, part II, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), pp. 306-319 (Y4,Ec7: W45/paper 12/pt.2). R. B. Hill, The Strengths of Black Families (New York: Emerson Hall, 1971). Weissberg, Intergenerational Welfare Dependency, pp. 257-274.

[41]Burgess and Price, An American Dependency Challenge. Burnside, "Pilot Study of Families with Dependent Children." Kriesberg, Mothers in Poverty. Berger and Simon, "Black Families and the Moynihan Report," pp. 145-161. Hill, Strengths of Black Families.

[42]Robert D. Hess and Virginia C. Shipman, "Early Experience and the Socialization of Cognitive Modes in Children," Child Development 36 (December 1965): 869-886.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Langner, "Psychiatric Impairment," pp. 10-21.

[45]Burgess and Price, An American Dependency Challenge.

[46]Zurcher and Green, From Dependency to Dignity.

[47]Edward Zigler, "Social Class and the Socialization Process," in The Socially Disadvantaged, ed. E. Ogletree (New York: MSS Information Corp., 1973), 1:77.

[48]Ibid., 1:67.

[49]Langner, "Psychiatric Impairment," pp. 10-21.

[50]Leonard Schneiderman also purports to find serious intergenerational pathology among welfare children--but his sample consisted of the longest stay cases on the rolls which comprise only 2.5 percent of the total and he doesn't even specify what proportion of this group were really sick families. "Value Orientation Preferences of Chronic Relief Recipients," Social Work 9 (July 1964): 13-18. Other well-known studies of "Multiproblem" families (for example, families on welfare which are known to several social agencies) have not been cited in this review also for reasons of sample limitations. For example, see Salvador Minuchin et al., Families of the Slums: An Exploration of Their Structure and Treatment (New York: Basic Books, 1967). Eleanor Pavenstedt, ed., The Drifters: Children of Disorganized Lower-Class Families (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967). Polansky, Borgman, and DeSaix, Roots of Futility.

[51]Gordon W. Blackwell and Raymond F. Gould, Future Citizens All (Chicago: American Public Welfare Association, 1952).

[52]Burgess and Price, An American Dependency Challenge.

[53]Greenleigh Associates, Inc., Facts Fallacies, and Future. Cited by Miller, "Characteristics of AFDC Families," pp. 399-409.

[54]Erdman Palmore, "Factors Associated with School Dropouts and Juvenile Delinquency Among Lower Class Children," Social Security Bulletin 26 (October 1963): 4-9.

[55]Perry Levinson, "The Next Generation: A Study of Children in AFDC Families," Welfare in Review 7 (March/April 1969): 1-9.

[56]Burgess and Price, An American Dependency Challenge.

[57]Levinson, "The Next Generation," pp. 1-9. Palmore, "Factors Associated With Dropouts and Delinguency," pp. 4-9.

[58]Berger and Simon, "Black Families and the Moynihan Report," pp. 145-161.

[59]Billy Reed Fox, "Effect of Public Welfare Affiliation, Absence of Father Figure and Other Selected Variable Factors on the Development of Socialization, Maturity, Responsibility and Intra-personal Structuring of Values Among Male High School Adolescents" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 1972).

[60]Goodwin, Do the Poor Want to Work?

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Shiller, "Empirical Studies of Welfare Dependency," pp. 19-32.

[64]O. D. Duncan, "Inheritance of Poverty or Race?"

[65]See especially Bennett Harrison, Education, Training, and the Urban Ghetto (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

[66]See especially Vernon L. Allen, "Personality Correlates of Poverty," in Psychological Factors in Poverty, ed. Vernon L. Allen (Chicago: Markham, 1970). E. Vance, "Social Disability," American Psychologist 28, no. 6 (1973): 498-511.

[67]H. Wilson, "Parenting in Poverty," British Journal of Social Work 4, no. 3 (1974): 241-254.

[68]Arlene S. Skolnick, The Intimate Environment: Exploring Marriage and the Family (Boston: Little, Brown 1973), p. 378.

[69]Ibid., pp. 378-379.

[70]M. Cole and J. Bruner, "Cultural Differences in Inferences About Psychological Processes," American Psychologist 26, no. 10 (1971): 867-876.

[71]Ibid., p. 867.

[72]Ibid., p. 874.

[73]U.S., General Accounting Office, Social Services: Do They Help Welfare Recipients Achieve Self-Support or Reduced Dependency No. B-160431 (3), (Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office, 1973), (GA1.13: So 1/2).

[74]Vance, "Social Disability." Wilson, "Parenting in Poverty."

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