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# Institute for Policy Research

## news

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## Poverty Center Hosts Conference on State Data

How can researchers extract the rich lode of administrative data buried in state agencies that is so critical for their studies of welfare reform? How do they obtain it in useable form? And how will they assure the privacy and confidentiality of welfare clients and agencies?

These were among the “make or break” issues aired at a conference on “Evaluating State Policy: The Effective Use of Administrative Data,” convened by the Poverty Center at Northwestern on June 16 and 17 and attended by more than 100 researchers and state administrators.

“With the new welfare reforms giving much greater discretion to states in the design of public assistance programs, it will become increasingly important to use such data in analyzing state-specific policies,” said Poverty Center Director **Rebecca Blank**.

Researchers at the conference presented nine papers showing how state administrative data has been used to

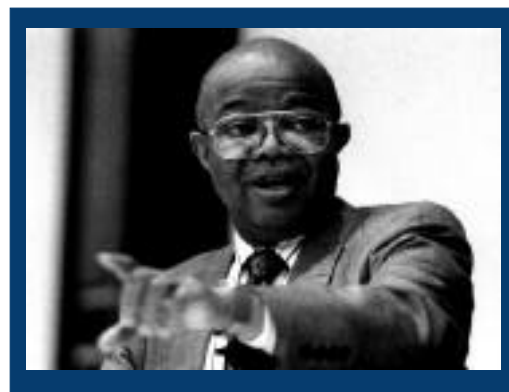
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## Comer Assails “Winner-Loser” Approach to Education

To level the playing field for low-income African-American and Latino children, schools must discard the “winner-loser mentality” that pervades our culture and focus instead on child development and the effects of social deprivation. This attitude must permeate the school system—from elementary classrooms to graduate schools of education.

Noted educational reformer James Comer delivered this pointed message at an April 23 lecture at Northwestern. He urged a packed audience of more than 200 academics, teachers, and administrators to “create a school system that will prepare low-income children for the real world.” The lecture was jointly sponsored by the Institute for Policy Research and the School of Education and Social Policy as part of their 1997 distinguished public lecture series.

“It is very late in the day,” warned



James Comer

Comer, who believes “the year 2000 may be a psychological watershed for education.”

Comer is the Maurice Falk Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale Child Study Center and an associate dean of the Yale Medical School. He is best known as the creator of an innovative School Development Program, which has been adopted by more than 600 elementary and middle schools in 21 states and the District of Columbia.

Drawing frequently on his own life experiences, the soft-spoken child psychiatrist took both title and substance for his talk from his forthcoming book, *Waiting for a Miracle: Why Schools Can't Solve Our Problems—And How We Can*.

“The problem in our society is the deep-seated cultural belief that outcomes in life are determined by intelligence and will,” Comer said. In this winner-loser equation, he thinks educators too often ignore low-income children’s limited opportunities to

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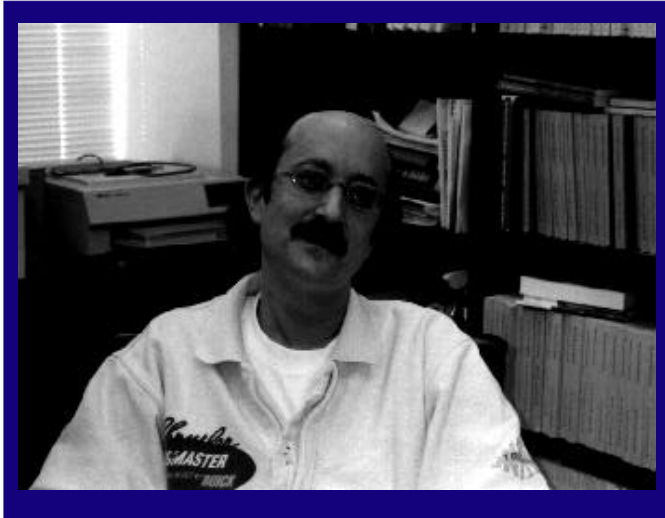
## New Welfare Limits To Hit Hard...and Soon

This summer the clock begins ticking for the new time limits for finding work and cutting off benefits that are the centerpiece of the 1996 welfare reform legislation.

Within eight years, 41% of the current caseload of AFDC recipients will reach the 60-month cutoff for lifetime receipt of welfare, according to a new study by **Greg Duncan** (IPR-Education), Kathleen Mullan Harris, and Johanne Boisjoly that examined monthly patterns of AFDC receipt during the 1980s and early 1990s. And within two years, the 24-month work requirements will force states to seek employment or some form of allowable work

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## Economist Explains Why More Consumers Going Broke



*Ian Domowitz*

**M**ore than a million households filed for bankruptcy last year, a rise of 27% over 1995. The first quarter of 1997 saw the greatest number of filers ever for a three-month period. And one in every 100 are projected to file by the time the year ends, according to the National Bankruptcy Review Commission (NBRC), which will propose reforms in federal bankruptcy laws to Congress next fall.

In a period of sustained economic growth, why are so many consumers in financial trouble? Some point the finger at more lenient bankruptcy laws. Others think there is less social stigma attached to going broke.

Economist **Ian Domowitz**, an IPR faculty fellow, thinks the blame lies elsewhere.

In testimony before a Senate Judiciary subcommittee on April 11, and before the NBRC on May 14, Domowitz cited uninsured medical debt and credit card debt as the primary culprits. When medical debt is more than 2% of income, the average household is 28 times more likely to declare bankruptcy than one whose medical debt is less than 2%, he testified.

Uninsured medical debt also has some lethal side effects. According to Domowitz, if the average household's credit card debt rises to the level of

the typical Chapter 7 bankruptcy filer, and the household has medical debt in excess of 2% of income, such an increase in credit card debt makes that household nine times more likely to file for bankruptcy, compared

with a six-fold jump in the absence of medical debt.

Health care and health insurance reform may be the best antidote to rising consumer bankruptcies, Domowitz said. He told the legislators that reform of those industries, "in the direction of more affordable care and wider insurance coverage, may do more to discourage bankruptcy filings than any new bankruptcy legislation."

Though he concurs with industry assertions that credit card use is only a small fraction of debt, Domowitz insists it is very highly correlated with, if not a causal determinant of, consumer bankruptcy. This is regardless of income characteristics, homeownership, and other family characteristics. Like other critics, he thinks a slowdown in issuing preapproved credit cards could stanch some of the flow of filings.

Some observers suggest that bankruptcy carries less stigma these days, which has also contributed to the rise in filings. Domowitz has found no evidence of this. His research also contradicts a widespread belief that more lenient bankruptcy laws have encouraged more people to file.

In addition to medical debt and overextended credit, the economist says both population growth and macroeconomic forces, including ebbs and flows of the business cycle, and

unexpected jolts, similar to the steep jump in oil prices during the late 1980s, may explain some of the rise in personal bankruptcies. Thus, he does not believe that "tinkering" with the bankruptcy system will affect the rate of aggregate filings by consumers.

Congress is concerned that too many consumers may be opting to file for bankruptcy under the more lenient Chapter 7 rather than Chapter 13 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. Chapter 7 requires liquidation of personal assets to pay off a portion of one's debts; the rest (except for home mortgages) are forgiven, and future income may be retained. Chapter 13 permits a person to keep his assets and pay off part of his debts (usually 70%) within a set time period (usually three years). The remainder of the debts are discharged.

Domowitz says his evidence indicates that households are correctly self-sorting by income, debt, and equity levels (e.g., lower-income under Chapter 7 and higher under Chapter 13). He finds no evidence of substantial Chapter 7 abuse.

The economist cautions that more research is needed before any new legislation is passed. "No one has produced any research that asks 'what are the economic determinants of bankruptcy at the household level?' We really don't know why people file," said Domowitz, who is currently at work on this issue.

### Newsletter Staff

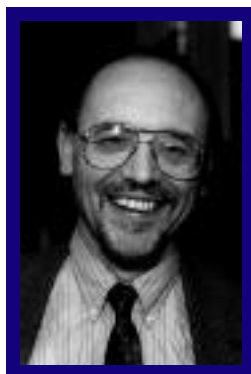
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## Two Academic Societies To Honor Thomas Cook



Tom Cook

Two of the nation's largest social science organizations will bestow back-to-back honors this summer on **Thomas D. Cook** (IPR-Sociology) one of Northwestern's most diverse and prolific social scientists.

On Sunday, August 10, Cook will deliver the keynote address at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association's (ASA) 400-member Methodology Section in Toronto. Seven days later, he will receive

the 1997 Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Division of Evaluation, Measurement, and Statistics (Division 5). The award and a special lecture by Cook will be presented at APA's annual meeting in Chicago.

APA's lifetime achievement award is based on Cook's "outstanding contributions in research methodology and program evaluation," according to Division 5 president Ronald K. Hambleton, a professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Cook is the second recipient of the new award. The first honoree was Peter Bentler, a psychologist at UCLA best known for his work on structural equation modeling. The award considers the contributions of scholars from the fields of statistics, measurement, evaluation, and assessment.

Lee J. Cronbach of Stanford, a leading figure in the field of evaluation who supported Cook for the award, said Cook is "the outstanding figure among those now writing on methodology for program evaluation." He cited the social scientist's originality, ability to think deeply, and "excellent command of the logic of inference from data."

Over nearly three decades, Cook has written five books (with two more in progress), edited three others, and written well over 100 scholarly articles and chapters, a body of work that has been translated into five languages. He is perhaps best known for his senior authorship (with the late psychologist, Donald T. Campbell) of *Quasi-Experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues for Field Settings* (1979), considered by many to be a classic in the field of methodology.

"Even today, 17 years after its publication, it still sells thousands of copies per year and is cited more than a hundred times per year in journal articles alone," said Cook collaborator William Shadish, professor of psychology at the University of Memphis, who nominated Cook for the award. In addition to Cook's scholarly writings on the nature and logic of experimental design, he was honored for his contributions to the field of program evaluation, particularly for the overviews laid out in his 1991 book, *The Foundations of Program Evaluation*, which he co-authored with Shadish and Laura Leviton.

Cook is noted for his theoretical and empirical work in developing concepts and methods for doing meta-evaluation and more recently, for his analyses of both the theory and practice of meta-analysis.

"He is one of the leading contributors to the methodology of evaluation research, especially the evaluation of important social programs," according to Stephen G. West, professor of psychology at Arizona State University and Chair of the Division 5 Awards Committee.

Colleagues also paid tribute to Cook's leadership in merging qualitative and quantitative methods in field research, a subject he addressed as keynote speaker at an international evaluation conference in Vancouver in 1995.

The APA award is the third major honor for Cook. In 1982, he was awarded the Myrdal Prize for Science from the Evaluation Research Society and in 1988 he received the Donald Campbell Prize for Innovative Methodology from the Policy Sciences Organization.

"I am honored to get this award," said Cook. "But it is also a tribute to all those scholars from the psychology department at Northwestern who collaborated in the social psychology and methodology and evaluation programs we had here during the 1970s and 80s."

Cook and his former colleagues, Lee Sechrest, Robert Boruch, Paul Wortman, and Campbell, comprised a social science methodology group at Northwestern "unparalleled in the country," concurs West.

In recent years, Cook has turned his attention to school reform and to understanding how social contexts relate to adolescent development. He is currently engaged in large-scale evaluations in Chicago, New Orleans, Cleveland, Detroit, and Prince George's County, Maryland of the experimental school reform program developed by Yale social psychiatrist James Comer (see story, p. 1).

Cook's latest book, *Urban Families and Adolescent Success* (in press, University of Chicago Press), is co-authored with Frank Furstenberg, Glenn Elder, Jacquelynne Eccles, and Arnold Sameroff. It deals with how families in high-risk settings manage the local environment to promote the welfare of their early adolescent children. Cook is currently completing another book with several postdoctoral students on how neighborhood, school, peer, and family processes work together—or sometimes at cross purposes—to influence how adolescents develop.

Beginning this fall, **Tom Cook** and IPR Director **Fay Lomax Cook** will be on leave as fellows at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford. **Joseph Altonji**, professor of economics and long-time IPR faculty fellow, will be acting director of the Institute during 1997-98.

## Comer (Continued from page 1)



*James Comer addresses audience.*

develop and participate in “the opportunity structure of society.”

Calling for schools that cater to students’ “real needs,” Comer stressed that “pouring bits and pieces of information into the head of a child will not work...We cannot assume that the communities these low-income children are growing up in now will provide the natural socialization and preparation that will enable them to participate in the mainstream of society.”

For nearly 30 years, Comer has attempted to improve these children’s life chances by applying principles of child development to

dysfunctional inner-city schools. Developed at the Yale Child Study Center, the Comer Program seeks to improve a school’s climate for learning by creating an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual trust. It stresses teamwork among parents, teachers, administrators, and support staff in both planning and managing school activities, with special attention

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**“People who don’t like children, and who can’t work with children, need to be selected out of education so they can do something else.”**

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to the developmental and behavioral needs of students.

In his talk, Comer asserted that there is “no cheap easy fix” for a decentralized educational system—with some 15,000 systems nationwide—that has been turned over to people who are not prepared to manage or teach. He stressed the importance of improving administrator and teacher training, including a sound ground-ing in child development, and the need to weed out teachers with bad atti-tudes toward slower children.

“People who don’t like children, and who can’t work with children, need to be selected out of education so they can do something else,” he said.

Graduate schools of education are woefully deficient in offering child development courses, said Comer. He suggested they recast themselves as “Schools of Child Development and Education,” and concentrate on a whole spectrum of development issues, not just early childhood.

Among his ideas for retraining practitioners, Comer advocated professional development schools that bring young people out into the real world, making connections between schools and the university like those between hospitals and medical schools. Similarly, educational extension services, modeled after those for agriculture, could offer retooling for practitioners. And school administrators might benefit from academies that offer the kind of rigorous training-and-retraining methods perfected by the U.S.military.

Comer thinks all this will help create

a new kind of school—a full-service school—“that will generate a new culture, a win-win culture.”

In his talk, Comer cited evidence from New Haven, Connecticut, that the School Development Program has been successful in improving both the educational and social achievement of children.



*School of Education and Social Policy alumna Vinita Ricks (R) makes her point. Comer school facilitator Della Allford looks on.*



*IPR director Fay Lomax Cook, who led the question and answer session, congratulates Comer on his lecture.*

An IPR team of researchers, led by **Thomas Cook** (IPR-Sociology), **Charles Payne** (IPR-African-American Studies) and **Diana Slaughter-Defoe** (IPR-Education and Social Policy), are currently analyzing results from a comprehensive evaluation of the Comer Program in K-8 schools in Chicago. Cook is also evaluating results from schools in Prince George’s County, Maryland.

## Study Finds School Climate Stifles Reform

School reformers face an uphill battle to implement change in inner-city schools because of the damaged social relationships that exist among teachers and administrators.

And unless they take into account this “irrational, often self-destructive behavior,” says **Charles Payne** (IPR-African-American Studies), the grandest plan may be doomed to failure.

In a new IPR working paper, “I Don’t Want Your Nasty Pot of Gold: Urban School Climate Revisited,” Payne reports that “in the worst of inner-city schools, the social infrastructure has been so damaged by mutual suspicion, low expectations, factionalization of staff, and general pessimism as to make most school reform efforts irrelevant.”

The sociologist reached this conclusion after analyzing six years of ethnographic data on 16 Chicago elementary schools that are implementing the Comer program (see story, p. 1). He is concerned with what facilitates or impedes the process of change.

Payne estimates that about half of the schools in Chicago have the kind of internal power structures likely to be associated with distrustful, suspicious relationships between and among teachers and principals. The effects are so insidious that even the most modest initiatives frequently flounder—including those that would clearly benefit the teachers.

In a typical example, he describes how one school’s middle-grade teachers initiated their own discipline policy. The policy worked quite well for about a year, but slowly “withered away,” as it fell victim to teacher apathy, backbiting, and petty jealousies.

When it came to preparing a new curriculum handbook, some teachers were so suspicious of each other that they were visibly uncomfortable with the idea of sharing what they were doing in the classroom, Payne relates. “The very idea of visiting someone else’s classroom was still commonly referred to as spying.”

Payne also observed that principals were antagonizing teachers by their inconsistent attitudes toward collaboration. “A principal may firmly believe

in collaborative, egalitarian ideals, and yet bracket them off as not being applicable to particular situations,” he found.

In Chicago’s decentralized school system, which was designed in part to empower parents, Payne says studies have shown that principals have consolidated power in their own hands in 40% of the schools. He feels that many parents lack the social capital, including the self-confidence necessary for them to take full advantage of the formal change in the power structure.

Payne suggests that reformers build into their plans some mechanisms that would prevent local decisionmakers from exerting unhealthy influence

and insure that appropriate in-building communication does in fact occur. “It might mean that we would simply never have programs where teachers are ‘retrained’ and then left to implement on their own,” he says.

Funders who seek to maximize their investments in schools are also missing these points, Payne says. Though Comer himself wanted to

begin with only two schools in Chicago, local foundations wanted to begin with schools in almost every city neighborhood. They compromised on four in each of the first two years, which was much too fast, says Payne, since “they were moving into new schools before they completely had a handle on what was going on in their old ones.”

After six years of observing Chicago schools in the process of change, Payne believes that the first two or three years of school reform typically involve clearing away social impediments to change rather than actually implementing any specific program. “It may take some schools that long to create a social infrastructure that will give them a chance to start actual implementation,” he concludes.

And he thinks it is high time that reformers paid heed.



*Charles Payne (left) was among the intent audience of educators for Comer’s talk.*

## Potholes on the Path to Welfare Reform

The landmark welfare reform legislation passed by Congress last fall may be a minefield for welfare mothers but a fertile field for research, suggests economist **Rebecca Blank** in an article on “The 1996 Welfare Reform” that appears in the latest issue of *NU Policy Research* (see box, p. 7).

By abolishing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and replacing it with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant to states, the law gives states nearly complete control over design of their public assistance programs and much more discretion in determining allocation of funds, Blank points out. It imposes new mandates for work requirements, payment limits for recipients, and a mandatory 5-year limit on support—though states may



*Rebecca Blank*

exempt 20% of their caseload and support them with state funds. But it offers states no new federal funds to expand their work programs.

These provisions, which went into effect July 1, 1997, could have serious ramifications for women now receiving AFDC, Blank cautions. She questions whether many of them could actually work a significant number of hours in the labor market, given their lack of skills and personal and health problems. Citing the higher unemployment rates and lower earnings of high school dropouts, especially those residing in isolated rural areas and urban sections of concentrated poverty, she thinks “the 1996 welfare reform legislation might be too optimistic about job availability, even in a strong macroeconomy.” For those who do get jobs, the effects on their children’s well-

being are unknown and should be of high priority for researchers, she says.

Blank points to other wide-open areas for research that include:

- The effects of expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, the efficacy of states’ collection and enforcement of child support from absent parents, the availability of child care, and health insurance for the working poor.
- The effect of the block grants on states’ fiscal situations and spending patterns. Many observers expect states to decrease funds allotted to public assistance and transfer them to other budgetary needs, Blank says. If the economy were to slide into recession and more people require assistance, there is a danger that states may not be able to come up with the funds, especially for short term aid, she warns.
- The need for data and estimation techniques that can adequately study state-specific changes. Researchers must deal with the difficulties of accessing state administrative data, often poorly documented and full of

## New Welfare Limits (continued from page 1)

activity for 52% of their current caseloads.

“The percentage of recipients that is likely to be affected by the 60-month limit on welfare receipt is twice as high as the percentage of exemptions allowed in the new legislation,” said Duncan, who is also an affiliate at the Northwestern University/University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research. Given block grants to offer time-limited assistance under the new welfare block grant program, states are permitted to exempt up to 20% of their caseloads from the 60-month lifetime limit for reasons of hardship.

“Unless behavior changes dramatically in response to the 1996 provisions, our estimates suggest that even when applying the most optimistic assumptions, an alarming number of low-income families will be affected by the new time limits,” said Duncan.

“The number of children ultimately affected will run into the millions.”

The researchers used Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) data on monthly patterns of AFDC receipt and employment between 1983 and 1995 to estimate how many families will be affected by the new welfare legislation and the length of time it will take for recipients to reach work and benefit cutoff deadlines.

Those most at risk are recipients who have never been married; who got on welfare when they were young; who lack a high school diploma; and who had preschool children when they first received welfare.

The distinction between current caseload recipients and first-time recipients is crucial in estimating how many families are likely to be affected by time limits, said Duncan. A 60-month limit applied to families first

starting to receive benefits will affect only a minority of them, since most will never reach the limit. That is not the case, however, for the current caseload, which is overrepresented by long-term recipients.

The researchers caution that estimates may overstate the percentage of recipients affected by the new time limits, because some families may change behavior in anticipation of the time limits. “Still, even very optimistic assumptions about behavior leave more than one-third of recipients facing benefit cutoff,” Duncan said.

The study, entitled “Time Limits and Welfare Reform: New Estimates of the Number and Characteristics of Affected Families,” is available on the Web at <http://www.spc.uchicago.edu/PovertyCenter>, or may be ordered for \$5.00 from the Poverty Center.

## War on Poverty Brought Material Relief

coding errors. Information on nonrecipients—an important control group—and follow-up data on recipients who leave programs is scarce, she says.

Given the difficulty of implementing large organizational changes in state bureaucracies, Blank expects less than dramatic effects of the new legislation, particularly of a positive nature. The latter are especially unlikely, Blank says, “because the most disadvantaged populations—women at risk of long-term welfare use, with multiple out-of-wedlock children and whose job preparation is lowest—have proved hard to reach through policy interventions and appear to have only limited labor market options.

“At the very least it is unlikely to be cheap, quick, or easy to move them into greater self-sufficiency and employment and could make their situations worse,” she concludes.

*Blank is an IPR faculty fellow and director of the Northwestern University/University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research.*

### About NUPR

The second issue of IPR’s new electronic journal, *NU Policy Research*, is now accessible on the World Wide Web. It features four articles by IPR researchers that are summarized on these pages and elsewhere in the newsletter.

Rebecca Blank (opposite page) examines the new welfare reform legislation. In the adjacent column, Susan Mayer revisits the War on Poverty. On page 12, James Witte explains why East German fertility rates have been falling, and James Rosenbaum and Shazia Miller (p. 13) analyze why employers have trouble finding good workers.

*NUPR* was conceived by its first editor, the late political scientist **Herbert Jacob**, and is now edited by economist **Greg Duncan**. The next issue is scheduled for fall.

Has America’s antipoverty war failed? Not necessarily, says University of Chicago sociologist Susan Mayer, who spent fall and winter terms as a visiting scholar at IPR. Mayer believes that evidence cited to support the claim of failure is sometimes mismeasured, frequently misrepresented, and often seriously misleading.

Most studies, she points out, have found small but positive effects of the major antipoverty programs. Food stamps, for example, have increased food intake, Medicaid has increased visits to physicians, and the benefits of job training programs for AFDC recipients have exceeded their costs. Yet she maintains that this evidence played a relatively minor role in the debate that led to the recent welfare reform legislation.

In an article for the second issue of *NU Policy Research*, Mayer focuses on cash transfers to families, noncash transfers to improve material living conditions of the poor, and education and job training. Among her conclusions:

- *Official poverty statistics are misleading and therefore exaggerate the increase in poverty.* But the official poverty measure is seriously flawed. When Mayer and Harvard sociologist Christopher Jencks corrected some of the defects in the official measure, they found that the poverty rate may have fallen by 4.5 percentage points between 1969 and 1989.

- *Material living conditions improved substantially during the 1970s and 1980s.* Most of the money spent on the war on poverty went to improve poor people’s housing, food consumption, and access to medical care, says Mayer, and “these programs worked.” For example, in the two decades between 1973-75 and 1991-93, more poor families had central air-conditioning, two bathrooms, a car, and a telephone, and by 1993 the income gap in children’s doctor visits had almost disappeared.

- *Education and job training programs were relatively ineffective.* Given the great disparity in federal spending for job training and education (\$2-billion in 1992) compared with AFDC (\$13.5-billion), food stamps (\$32.6-billion), and medical care (\$78.5-billion), “it was not surprising they failed to generate large improvements in earnings or large savings in welfare expenditures,” says Mayer. Though test scores improved and more teenagers graduated from high school, the demands of the labor market increased even more, contributing in part to the decline in earnings of today’s male high school graduates.

- *Social problems could have been worse.* There is no question that some social problems associated with poverty, such as single motherhood, crime, and joblessness, have worsened during the past 30 years, which suggests that improving the material living conditions of poor families is not enough to eliminate all of poverty’s by-products, Mayer concedes. “But without improvements in material well-being, ignorance, disease, delinquency, crime, irresponsibility, immorality, and indifference might have been worse.”



*Susan Mayer*

**You can access NU Policy Research at**  
<http://www.library.nwu.edu/publications/nupr>

## Speakers Debate Efficacy of Social Science Research



Richard Nathan

Social scientists sparred with officials from government and the nonprofit sector as they assessed

the strengths and shortcomings of their trade during IPR's yearlong faculty seminar series on "Social Science Research and Public Policy: How Do They Connect?" The series was developed by IPR director **Fay Lomax Cook**.

Eight featured speakers offered their views on the role of basic and applied research in formulating and executing government and educational policy and policing strategies, and in furthering foundation objectives. They also looked at linkages to investigative reporting (see box) and advances in experimental methods.

Their bottom line may have best been expressed by Laurence Lynn, at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration: "Given the sheer complexity of social problems and human behavior, research rarely settles anything. It often raises more questions than it answers."

Nonetheless, from all sides of the spectrum, speakers generally agreed that social science research can often effectively describe and interpret social conditions and trends, design and evaluate social interventions, provide useful analytic tools for administrators and practitioners, and positively influence public debate and public policy—if policymakers would only listen.

From a funder's viewpoint, "the strengths of social science lie in its ability to produce accurate and in-depth descriptions of social realities," said Paul Lingenfelter, vice president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. He pointed, for example, to recent research

sponsored by MacArthur on the effects of domestic violence on women's employment. He said social science evaluations can also deepen understanding of simple replicable interventions, such as the effects of class size on learning, though he conceded that it is difficult to design such interventions with sufficient power to yield strong effects. Of paramount interest to MacArthur is the usefulness of research that helps improve practice.

Richard Nathan, director of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, believes that social science is most effective when it studies conditions and trends, conducts demonstration studies, and does evaluations. He offered as examples work done by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, and the Urban Institute's current study of Family Well-Being.

Yet as the series proved, social scientists may be their own harshest critics.

In his talk, Nathan revisited his 1988 book, *Social Science in Government: Uses and Misuses*, and said it had an upbeat tone he wasn't sure he would support today.

For starters, he said the "three bad habits" of applied social science he described in his book are still valid criticisms: overspecialization, technical overkill, and a quest for precision about causality that is too much like the natural sciences. "Social science and social behavior are a special environment and we need to be very thoughtful about that," he said.

Though social science can be useful as an input for politicians, Nathan said he worries that "too much of the time social scientists doing relevant research act too much like politicians. This is role confusion." It may

be impossible to achieve, he said, but social scientists should strive to be more impartial, objective, and neutral. "I am more pessimistic about social science behavior than the usefulness of it," he explained. "Social scientists do an awful lot of shouting. I don't know why that is our role."

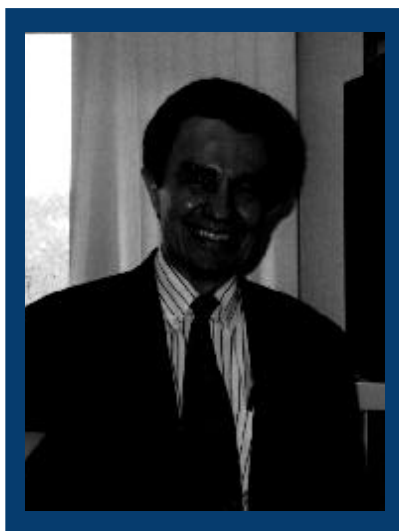
Lynn's perspective was whether social science research can be useful for public management, and whether management even matters to governmental performance.

While there are many positive benefits of scientific knowledge, he said, there is relatively little research on managerial performance. What little exists is often overlooked and many other factors impinge on both the behavior of public managers and the formulation of policy.



Nathan (center) offers ideas to IPR faculty and students.

Focusing on what he termed "the darker side of social science research usage," Lynn thinks that "beliefs, ideology, self-interest, and the exercise of political property rights drive policy in spite of the availability of good thinking and good data." He said policymakers are strongly influenced by political exigencies, such as the need to cut budgets and reduce deficits, as well as the power of money in a media age and the rise of single issue politics. And many other factors affect governmental performance as well, such as the availability of resources, mandated policy and



*Paul Lingenfelter*

program designs, and social structures of professional policy networks.

From a foundation standpoint, scientific knowledge is sometimes too abstract and probabilistic to be useful to practitioners in decisionmaking, Lingenfelter said. He suggested that more thought be given to “ways of formulating questions and getting connected to practice that will add more discipline and more analysis to decision making about social policy without at the same time imposing on social reality a mechanistic model that doesn’t work in the real world.”

A more upbeat and methodological perspective was supplied by William Shadish, professor of psychology at the University of Memphis and a visiting scholar at IPR this spring, who explained how social experimentation has made great strides over the past 30 years.

There has been real progress in dealing with selection bias and attrition, and in estimating treatment effects for dropouts from programs, he said. The development of meta-analysis has improved the ability of social scientists to generalize from experiments and they, in turn, have learned how to design social experiments that reflect the diversity of value positions in policy arenas. On the other hand, such experiments are

## Why Can’t a Journalist Be More Like A Social Scientist? – And Vice Versa

Social science methods may seem light years removed from the techniques employed by top-quality investigative journalists. Yet in his February 28 lecture, **David Protes** (IPR-Journalism) offered some striking similarities, particularly in their process of inquiry:

- Both begin with a working hypothesis informed by previous stories (or studies), leads (or new developments in the field), and critical thinking, often about social problems.
- Both rigorously test their hypotheses and check out alternatives. In so doing, investigative reporters employ field methods similar to ethnographers. A case in point is their growing use of triangulation to corroborate a working hypothesis.

In Chicago’s notorious Ford Heights Four case, for example, Protes and three Medill students uncovered evidence leading to the release of four wrongfully convicted African-American men. He described how the group went about reanalyzing testimony from key witnesses, sifting through forensic evidence, and searching for alternative suspects.

The best of investigative journalists also share with social scientists a desire to seek external validity, Protes maintained, and if larger patterns emerge, their findings can influence public policy issues. He believes the Ford Heights Four investigation, for example, has had bearing on national debates over capital punishment, the use of DNA evidence in criminal cases, compensation for the wrongfully incarcerated, liability of law enforcement officials who prosecute these cases, and preventative resources to head off miscarriages of justice.

“It is a shame that we should see these two houses as separate,” said Protes, “when in fact we are part of the same kind of process of inquiry in trying to find truth.”

Both might benefit, however, from more merging of the two approaches. “Investigative journalists often miss the bigger picture by focusing on specific cases and ignoring broader classes, and social scientists miss an important dimension by dwelling on classes at the expense of rich material about individual cases,” he concluded.

time-consuming and costly, and their usefulness is frequently long-term and conceptual, rather than short-term and instrumental.

Among the problems still to be solved, Shadish said, are obtaining valid estimates of effects from nonrandomized experiments, and better estimates of treatment effects in randomized experiments where there is attrition from treatment. He also thinks there is still unresolved ambiguity about how the role of social experimentation ought to be structured into the policy sciences and into the governmental process.

“Experiments are no longer on the

pedestal on which they once stood, but rather are now standing on the same ground with the rest of the many methods we use in the policy sciences,” Shadish concluded. “It’s a less ambitious and exalted position, but also a safer, more realistic, and more collaborative role.”

Earlier speakers in the faculty seminar series included Wendall Primus, a former deputy assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, **Wesley Skogan** (IPR-Political Science), and **James Rosenbaum** (IPR-Education).

# Policy Perspectives

by John P. Kretzmann



John P. Kretzmann

*John (Jody) Kretzmann is co-director of IPR's Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute and an IPR research associate. He and ABCD co-director, John McKnight, are co-authors of Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets (1993).*

## The Presidents' Summit: Impressions from the Valley

What can one see from a summit? The big picture, perhaps, as well as the top of other peaks. But seldom does the magnificent view from the summit allow one much insight into the valleys below, certainly not into their infinite variety and rich particularity.

And so it was in Philadelphia. Presidents and First Ladies called upon governors and mayors and corporate CEOs not only to commit *themselves* and their organizations to the future of the nation's children, but to galvanize a massive outpouring of *citizen* energy around their lofty purposes. This was a summit that aimed to be more than a one-shot event. Or as Summit Chairman Colin Powell repeatedly stressed, "The real work begins back home in your communities."

Weeks have gone by since the mountaintop gathering, so it seems appropriate to take a first look at its aftermath. Conversations with dozens of summit participants, and visits to a number of cities that sent delegations to Philadelphia, have produced three initial impressions.

First, there is significant follow-up activity in at least some states and local communities. Virginia, for example, hosted its own day-long "summit" for hundreds of folks, who heard from the state's two delegations, from Richmond and Virginia Beach. Statewide conclaves like Virginia's can serve at least two purposes—they can align and connect the state's various child and family-centered departments with each other, and with local county, municipal, and community counterparts; and they can begin to catalyze a statewide network of communities to help inform each other's work, share best practices, etc.

Most of the 100 municipalities that sent delegations to Philadelphia are following up as they promised, with local "mini-summits" of their own. Understandably, these promises of convening across sectors and local geographic boundaries seem much more powerful and potentially useful in smaller or mid-sized cities—Savannah, Fresno, or Charlotte, for example—than in Chicago or Detroit.

A second clear impression centers on the substantive focus of the summit, the commitment to a clearly articulated policy-and-action agenda focused on the well-being of young people. The five summit goals, widely publicized and endlessly repeated, capture many of the most promising ideas in the youth development field and package them in an easily digestible format. The core goals that every child is "entitled" to a healthy start, a safe environment, relationships with caring adults, and the opportunities to contribute to the community and to enter into the economy provide a usefully spare framework for the burgeoning field.

A third impression is more cautionary. Insofar as the summit aimed to expand significantly the number and kinds of people, groups, and resources committed to and actively involved in youth development activities, it is too soon to tell if it succeeded. In two critical sectors, commitments made to date appear modest at best. The private sector, well-represented by Fortune 500 CEOs in Philadelphia, has pledged a range of resources (employees' time perhaps the most significant), but most tend toward the not-too-costly and the symbolic. Small and mid-sized firms were hardly visible at all in Philadelphia, and are more susceptible to local than national efforts to involve them.

And finally, did the "citizens' summit" mobilize "ordinary" citizens? In a few communities, perhaps. But most of the non-government, non-CEO types who gathered in Philadelphia were the "usual suspects"—officials and leaders from the national youth-serving agencies and philanthropies, committed people whose job descriptions include attendance at all major conferences, especially "summits."

So that, finally, is the major limitation of life at the mountaintop. It is terribly difficult to find or create space for neighbors, for block captains, for congregational leaders, for the very people whose commitments are most critical. General Powell is right—the real action is back home, in the valleys.

## McKnight Maps a Future for the Family

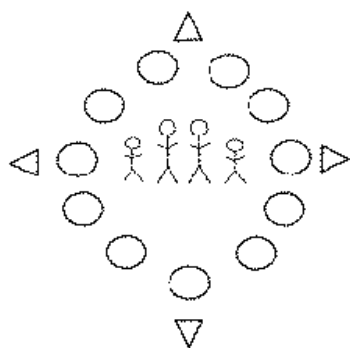
Community associations—ranging from Bible study groups to block clubs—may hold the key to social reform and revival in the 21st century, according to IPR’s director of community studies, **John McKnight**.

In a recent IPR report, *A Twenty-First Century Map for Healthy Communities and Families* (1996), McKnight unveils a revised “social map” that pushes large bureaucratic service systems to the fringes of the community and replaces them with newly empowered associations as the primary support for families (see diagram).

“Associations provide the power that mobilizes a person with a missing leg to use his carpentry skills to build a community center,” says McKnight, who is fond of noting that professional services see the same person as disabled and needing help.

To harness this communal power requires a paradigm shift in policy assumptions, says McKnight, who argues that policymakers must divert resources from service systems to provide more economic opportunity for the poor. He insists they give community economic development priority over remedial or compensatory services, and prepurchase services only as a last resort.

McKnight, who also co-directs IPR’s Asset-Based Community



*McKnight's revised social map for the 21st century shows families primarily supported by informal and formal associations (circles). The outer ring of service systems (triangles) offers them a secondary source of support.*

Development (ABCD) Institute, is convinced that the public has grown dubious of the proposition that pouring more dollars, resources, professionals, training, and technology into large systems will stem social ills.

“Increasingly, research scholars and foundation experimentalists are lending less and less support for the policy map of a family surrounded by expanding services,” he writes in *A Twenty-First Century Map*, which was published as the lead article in a special issue of *Families in Society* (March/April 1997), one of the nation’s most widely read journals for social workers.

McKnight’s ideas have made traditional family agency professionals squirm uncomfortably,” acknowledged

guest editor Lynn McDonald in her introduction to the special issue, which focused on community development.

“However, his ideas need to be heard.”

McKnight has long contended that large social service systems depend for their existence upon needs to fix, namely “the deficiency, inadequacy, brokenness, or disease of people,” which turns them into clients. In his view, associational communities depend upon the capacities, gifts, and skills of people, which lead ultimately to citizen power.

In McKnight’s revised social model, associations provide a context for communal care and mutual support, especially in times of crisis. They offer the potential for rapid and individualized responses to local problems, free of red tape, and allow individual talents to be more easily discovered and put to use in solving local problems. This, in turn, encourages citizens to take responsibility and develop leadership, and the community becomes a seedbed for developing local enterprise.

“Because the dominant social policy map does not recognize the associational community, it is a fatal guide to the 21st century,” McKnight warns. “It will lead to the shoals of a serviced society surrounded by a sea of social failure.”

*Copies of A Twenty-First Century Map are available from IPR’s publications department at a price of \$5.00.*

### Impoverished Chicago Community Abounds With Associational Activity

In Grand Boulevard, one of Chicago’s poorest communities, **John McKnight’s** research team uncovered a rich and varied associational life in which at least 319 groups were involved in an array of activities that ran the gamut from beautifying neighborhoods to fighting drug abuse. A new publication, *Voluntary Associations in Low-Income Neighborhoods: An Unexplored Community Resource*, provides an “indicative snapshot” of this activity in 1995, based on data gathered from written materials, interviews, and field and phone surveys. The study finds these associations were involved in significant community-building activity, especially caregiving (i.e., working with youth and senior citizens), job training and placement, and dealing with “neighborhood challenges” such as teen pregnancy and child abuse. Though fewer were involved in local economic development, large numbers indicated their willingness to become involved in all of these activities. The publication offers a plan for tapping into this potential and maps out a special role for funders. *Copies of the report are available from IPR’s publications department at a price of \$5.00.*

## Will Private Funds Alter Public Broadcast Mission?

When President Johnson signed the Public Broadcasting Act in 1967, he called the new Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) “the people’s corporation, fully independent, broadly representative, supported by public and private money.” The problem with the act, and with public broadcasting, is that its mission is so closely linked to funding, and funding has always been precarious.

A new IPR working paper by **Craig LaMay** (IPR-Medill) and **Burton Weisbrod** (IPR-Economics), “The Funding



LaMay

Perils of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting,” examines the many ways that U.S. public broadcasting has sought to increase revenues over the years, particularly as tax-based funding has declined. Federal funding to public broadcasting, for example, peaked at 27% of revenues in 1980, and now accounts for about 14% of CPB’s \$1.8 billion annual revenue.

Private sources of funding—viewers, corporations, and foundations—now account for more than 50% of public broadcasting revenues. Of particular interest to LaMay and Weisbrod is what this change means for public broadcasting’s mission and its future.

Unlike most of the world’s public broadcasters, which operate under much more detailed public-service

requirements, the CPB has no clear mission. It was introduced as an antidote to a private, commercial broadcasting system that was giving short shrift to cultural, arts, and public affairs programming. A PBS executive, for example, once described public television as “English people talking and animals mating, and occasionally



Weisbrod

visa versa.” In a multichannel environment, Englishmen and animals are now available elsewhere, and the competition for all forms of programming drives up costs, thus making public broadcasting’s financial weakness very nearly debilitating.

The predictable result is that public broadcasters have turned much more aggressively to new, private revenue opportunities. In Chicago, for example, WTTW-Channel 11 partners in several retail “Stores of Knowledge,” operates a commercial radio station (WFMT), a classical radio network, and leases its studio space for television production. These activities are not in themselves undesirable, LaMay and Weisbrod say, but they do raise questions about the purposes—and the public—that public broadcasting is supposed to serve.

LaMay and Weisbrod’s working paper will appear as a chapter in a forthcoming book on commercialism and the nonprofit sector, edited by Weisbrod and published by Cambridge University Press.

## Study Finds Job Insecurity Squashes East German Birth Rate

After East and West Germany reunited in 1990, fertility rates in the East dropped sharply when employed women elected to stay in the labor force rather than risk losing their jobs permanently.

Despite some signs of improvement by 1995, East German fertility rates have stayed at an extremely low level since the fall of 1991—well below the rates in the West—causing concern about a shrinking labor force in the future.

These are among the findings by **James Witte** (IPR-Sociology) after analyzing data from the German Socio-Economic Panel, which has surveyed more than 4000 East Germans annually since 1990 on a group of variables that include labor force participation and fertility histories.

Witte’s analysis attributes much of the steep drop in fertility rates—40% between 1990 and 1991 alone—to the personal economic insecurity of East German women. He points out that by the fall of 1991, the East German economy had lost an estimated 2.4 million jobs and by the end of 1992, the total decline in employment exceeded 35% of the reunification labor force.

Even worse, unemployment for East German women aged 18-35 increased 50% between 1991 and 1992. “Thus for many East Germans, economic uncertainty was replaced by the certainty of unemployment,” Witte said.

Among those who did bear children, Witte found ferti-

lity much more likely for women who are out of the labor force or unemployed, and who also share a household with an employed partner, than for women who work in full-time jobs. This was also true for women with regular part-time rather than full-time jobs. The sociologist says these findings are consistent with a popular hypothesis that unemployed women face lower opportunity costs than their employed counterparts and are thus more likely to bear a child.

Amid signs that East Germany’s economy is on the road to recovery, Witte thinks “it is plausible to expect that many births were simply postponed and not altogether foregone.”

However, the government faces a delicate balance between trying to improve current employment opportunities for women and not reducing the overall size of its future labor force. To prevent any such measures from exacerbating the existing gender inequality in the labor market, Witte recommends that policymakers make extra efforts to help women reintegrate into the paid labor force if they have interrupted their careers to have children. Steps also should be taken to enable women to combine childrearing and employment outside the home by providing adequate and affordable childcare as well as more opportunities for career-oriented part-time jobs, he says.

*This study appears in the current issue of NUPR and is available as an IPR working paper for \$5.00.*

## Researchers Identify “Missing Link” in Hiring

A recent IPR study contests the common-sense assumption that employers use the best information available in making their hiring decisions. The study finds that employers doubt the value of most information they get about job applicants, and rely instead on their “gut instincts.”

Overwhelmingly, employers say they want individuals with good attitudes, interpersonal skills, and basic academics. Yet they hire candidates based on superficial traits such as dress and demeanor and, for the most part, ignore information they could acquire from high school grades, teacher recommendations, former employers, or employment agencies—because they don’t trust it.

Researchers have long known that employers’ gut instincts are poor predictors of performance and often biased. The present study indicates that employers recognize these flaws, but don’t realize they have other options they can trust.

**James Rosenbaum** (IPR-Education) and IPR graduate fellow Shazia Miller reached these conclusions after interviewing a sample of 51 urban and suburban Chicago firms.

They found that most employers are wary of asking teachers about students’ academic skills and work habits because they regard the information as biased—either too positive, or too negative. Employers complain that employment agencies do not know enough about applicants’ capabilities or companies’ needs. They discount previous employers’ recommendations for fear of ulterior motives to get rid of bad employees, or because of irrelevant criteria. The researchers suspect the threat of liability suits may also make former employers more circumspect.

Having turned their backs on much of this available information, employers place their faith instead in personal interviews, even though they realize the process is flawed. Many admit that while they may not trust what applicants themselves tell them, they can make judgments based on superficial physical characteristics, such as posture, dress, hair style, eye contact, or manner of speaking.

These methods run a real risk of unintended bias, since some behaviors, such as not making direct eye contact, could be dictated by cultural differences. “By dismissing outside sources of information, employers judge on less fair and more superficial criteria,” the researchers say.

Then why don’t employers devise their own tests? They respond that such tests are too cumbersome to develop and

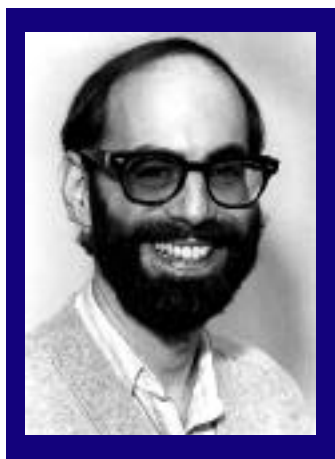
administer under equal opportunity guidelines, and they won’t measure work habits or interpersonal skills.

The study indicated, however, that some employers will make use of outside information when it is conveyed through a social network of personal relationships. Recommendations from the firm’s own employees can provide such trusted information, although it may result in reinforcing the homogeneity of the current workforce. And while most employers mistrust teacher recommendations, those who have long-term relationships with teachers find they can provide trustworthy information about the qualities these employers most value. Thus, the common-sense assumption

that employers will use the best information only holds within social networks that overcome employers’ mistrust.

The prevailing mistrust, however, has some serious ramifications, the study concludes. It is contributing to employers’ hiring difficulties, especially since the subjective and superficial information gleaned in interviews may not apply to manufacturing and

other jobs where interpersonal relations are not major concerns. It can taint hiring decisions with cultural and racial biases that disproportionately affect minorities. And it also removes the main incentive for non-college-bound students to learn academic skills and work habits in school.



*James Rosenbaum*



*Shazia Miller*

### Conference to Focus on Domestic Abuse

The Poverty Center will host a conference at Northwestern, September 24-26, to promote a full-scale research effort on the relationship between domestic violence and poverty. The conference, “Trapped in Poverty/Trapped in Abuse: Developing a New Research Agenda on Domestic Violence and Welfare,” will be co-sponsored by the Taylor Institute and the University of Michigan Research Development Center on Poverty, Risk, and Mental Health.

Organizers’ goals are to share methodological recommendations, develop a future research agenda, and create a network of researchers who can collaborate, exchange findings, and develop methodological strategies. Participants will include welfare department planners, academics, service providers, policy advocates, and government officials. For information, contact Jody Raphael at the Taylor Institute (Phone 773-342-5510).

## Faculty Bookshelf



***It Takes a Nation. A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty*** (Princeton University Press and Russell Sage Foundation, 1997). Poverty Center Director **Rebecca M. Blank** (IPR-Economics) examines

the changing nature of poverty in America. She explains why it is harder to combat today than in the past because of both the changing demographics of the poor and the major deterioration in earnings among less-skilled workers. Blank demonstrates that government aid has been far more effective than most people think and that even private support for the poor depends extensively on public funds. In so doing, she makes a strong case for a continued mix of private and public programs. The book concludes with a review of recent policy changes and suggests how to improve public assistance programs to assure a safety net, while still encouraging poor adults to find employment and support their families.



***What Money Can't Buy for Children: Family Income and Children's Life Chances*** (Harvard University Press, 1997). Sociologist Susan Mayer concludes that once basic material

needs are met, the characteristics of parents, such as skills, honesty, good health, and reliability, are more important to how children turn out than anything more money can buy. According to Mayer, it's not that additional parental income doesn't improve children's life chances, it's just that additional income is not as important as many social scientists have thought, and the relationship between parental income and children's outcomes is a lot more complicated than most people have thought.

Mayer employs five strategies to assess the causality between parental income and children's outcomes. She measures the effect of income from various sources; the apparent effect of parental income before and after an outcome; the effects of parental investment in children (e.g., what they buy, and even the impact of their psychological well-being). She then assesses trends in parental income and children's outcomes, and exogenous sources of income variation, such as government policies.

Her estimates suggest that conventional models of the effect of income overstate its importance to children's outcomes. She points out that cash and noncash transfers have helped reduce the most serious material deprivations experienced by American children, and appear to have narrowed the gap between rich and poor children's material living conditions. Mayer concludes from her results that although children's opportunities are unequal, income inequality is not the primary reason. "But if advantage comes from noneconomic factors, such as having parents who love to read or do math, and love rather than tolerate their children, it will be much harder to equalize opportunity," is her sober conclusion.



***The Urban Crisis: Linking Research to Action*** (Northwestern University Press, 1997) is the product of a Metropolitan Assembly convened by IPR in 1994 to identify the obstacles to

solving many of the most severe problems faced by cities. Edited by **Burton Weisbrod** (IPR-Economics) and **James Worthy** (IPR-Management), the book presents commissioned papers by leading sociologists and economists that examine how employment is linked to welfare reform (**Greg Duncan**, IPR-Education), crime (Jeffrey Fagan, Columbia University), housing and transportation patterns (Roberto Fernandez, Stanford), and schools (**James Rosenbaum**, IPR-Education). Other chapters focus on the problem of coordinating the actions of local governments in a metropolitan region (Howard Chernick, Hunter College, and Andrew Reschovsky, University of Wisconsin-Madison), and the obstacles confronting public-private partnership efforts to collaborate effectively in addressing urban problems (Jerome Rothenberg, MIT).

The book also presents the views of policymakers about what they need from the research community as they seek solutions. It concludes with an urban research agenda that outlines crucial questions that must be addressed in order to formulate more effective public policies.



***Consequences of Growing Up Poor*** (Russell Sage Foundation, 1997). In this collaborative work, editors **Greg Duncan** (IPR-Education) and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn of Columbia University and 33 other social scientists examine how economic

deprivation damages children—intellectually, emotionally, and physically—at all stages of development. They find these effects are selective, however. Low-income preschoolers, for example, exhibit poorer cognitive and verbal skills because they are generally exposed to fewer toys, books, and other stimulating experiences at home. In later years, conflict between economically stressed parents raises anxiety and lowers self-esteem in their teenage children.

The book also examines the effect of timing on children's vulnerability to poverty. Some investigators find, for example, that poverty in the prenatal or early childhood years is particularly detrimental to cognitive development and physical health. Others report a stronger negative effect during adolescence. There is also discussion of whether family conditions such as marital status, education, and involvement of parents mitigate the ill effects of poverty.

Based on their research, the editors and authors recommend more sharply focused child welfare policies targeted to specific eras and conditions of poor children's lives. They also weigh the relative need for income supplements, child care subsidies, and home interventions.

## Community Policing Takes Root in Chicago

For some nostalgic souls, community policing may evoke an image of Officer O’Leary “strolling down the avenue, holding an apple in one hand and twirling a nightstick in the other, shooing away pesky street urchins as he warmly greets passersby.”

In modern urban America, that’s much more myth than reality. But as **Wesley G. Skogan** (IPR-Political Science) and IPR Research Associate **Susan Hartnett** describe it in their new book, *Community Policing, Chicago Style* (Oxford University Press, 1997), mythology may be one more element in the growing popularity of this revolutionary policing strategy for combatting crime and disorder.

The book is one of the first detailed portraits of community policing in action. It is based on a large-scale process-and-outcome evaluation of the Chicago experiment by a research team headed by Skogan and coordinated by Hartnett that covers the first three years of implementation through 1995. The authors examine the roots and development of Chicago’s “unique homegrown approach” to community policing and its impact on community involvement, the quality of life in the neighborhoods, and the police involved in the program.

“Fostering innovation in police departments is a tough job,” say the authors, who think the process involved virtually “reinventing policing” and more than a bit of reinventing government as well.

Skogan and Hartnett suggest four guiding principles that are key to community policing: 1) organizational decentralization; 2) a commitment to problem-oriented policing, which requires police to shift from their traditional crime-fighting orientation to one that identifies the causes of problem situations and recognizes patterns; 3) police willingness to respond to citizens when setting priorities and developing tactics; and 4) the concept of police and citizens as “co-producers of safety.” In this latter role, police help neighborhoods to solve crime problems through their community organizations and prevention programs.

Politics played a big role in positioning Chicago to accept community policing, the authors maintain. They cite the rising political power of African-Americans and Hispanics, and an urgency to prevent urban violence, as powerful stimuli to Mayor Richard Daley’s full-fledged support of the initiative.

The emergence of more well-educated police administrators and the growing networks of police managers and policymakers who exchange information have also made inroads into the traditional culture of policing and its highly centralized structure. The wider societal trends toward decentralization and privatization of

public services, and widespread use of pagers, cellphones, and other technological devices have also contributed to its acceptance. And the current fiscal crisis has motivated police to look for ways to get more out of less money, they note.

Hartnett and Skogan are quick to point out that community policing has certainly not been an unqualified success. They attribute the many failures of earlier programs in large measure to a police culture that fears loss of control, to the lack of adequate police personnel, to supervisors who did not understand the new agenda, and to problems of interorganizational cooperation. Furthermore, they say the strategy is difficult to implement in neighborhoods fragmented by race, class, and lifestyle, and community involvement is hard to sustain, especially in poor neighborhoods that are traditionally suspicious of police and fearful of retaliation by gangs and drug dealers.

Nonetheless, the researchers see reason for optimism in Chicago’s experiment. They found changes in the visibility of policing, new optimism about the quality of police service, and evidence that crime, social disorder, and physical decay decreased in the community policing districts. “Every district registered some successes,” they report, including homeowners, renters, whites, and African-Americans. Hispanics, however, did not share the same levels of success. Their awareness and participation were low and thus they did not see a significant improvement in the quality of their lives. The researchers believe that addressing language and cultural barriers, which got less attention early on in the program, should help remediate this problem.

*Susan Hartnett, project director of the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) evaluation, briefs police lieutenants, captains, civilians, and city department officials on the progress of the citywide experiment. Two-week executive training sessions began in January to further develop leadership and management skills for CAPS participants, and to gather feedback from the field. “Research findings are often too late to do any good,” Hartnett explains. “This technique has made research much more dynamic and interesting, and some changes have been made based on our observations.”*



## Poverty Center Conference (continued from page 1)

evaluate aspects of state social policies such as child support enforcement, welfare-to-work, and family planning programs. Woven through all the sessions were discussions of data access and quality, sampling problems, and linkages between data from different programs and between administrative data and other data sources.

Conference participants also heard a preliminary report from the national Advisory Panel on Research Uses of Administrative Data headed by V. Joseph Hotz of the University of Chicago. The Poverty Center will release the panel's report in August.

"The panel was motivated by the realization that there is considerable state-by-state variation in administrative data and that surveys may not provide adequate information or produce the kind of substate information that could prove useful," Hotz explained.

*The Pluses.* "Administrative data could change the study of poor families in very important ways over the next 20 years," said Berkeley professor Henry Brady who demonstrated how linked datasets offer researchers more variables, more cases, and more points in time.

Noting that researchers are already using such data for studies of child welfare, child well-being, child care, and child support, as well as welfare-to-work programs, Brady said this data could also inform about program participants, special populations, small demographic groups and small areas, successful county models, and referral services—and cost far less than surveys. Furthermore, linking information across time and across programs of various agencies with multiple objectives could help assess the impact of such policies as time limits on public assistance.

But these sources also are limited by the nature of their data-gathering, a paucity of control variables, and their failure to measure outcomes, Hotz pointed out. There is also a problem of selection bias: Clients are counted only when they remain in programs and are lost when they leave; others seeking similar services may not be visible to researchers if they enroll in a different program with similar objectives.

*Key Issues.* Hotz's panel report will probably focus on the following "make or break" issues:

- Negotiating interagency agreements to match and link data.
- Establishing protocols in linking data and safeguards that protect the confidentiality and privacy of both clients and agencies.
- Making databases available to outside researchers.
- Establishing contractual or less formal agreements between researchers and administrators of datasets.

Hotz also cautioned that administrative data may be more time-consuming and costly than researchers believe, especially since coding is not very standardized. Researchers must also address methodological problems, such as the limited number of explanatory variables, the timeliness of data delivery, and the predilection of clients to tell different stories to different agencies.

*Follow the Leader.* "To be successful, we must develop institutional trust between researchers and state data-gathering agencies," Hotz said. The model for many in the field is Brady's UCData project at Berkeley. That unit has joined forces with California's Department of Social Services to compile a large group of datasets from around the state and has made them readily accessible to researchers. UCData is now surveying 20 cities to determine what datasets are available in their administrative information systems. Central archives like UCData can mediate between the state and other researchers, and could shoulder some responsibility for data cleaning, and maintaining and establishing data links, Blank suggested.

The report will emphasize the need to build relationships with providers and push for common standards for data across states. It is also likely to recommend a clearinghouse, perhaps with a Web site, to provide help for states that have not yet developed information sources.

"This conference could not come at a more important time," observed IPR Director **Fay Lomax Cook**. "With the devolution of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to the state level, good state-level data and good use of it are crucial to help us understand the effects of welfare reform in people's lives. The more we can encourage states to use similar measures in collecting data, the better we can make comparisons not only within states, but across states."

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