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FOCUS

Institute for Research on Poverty
Newsletter

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PUBLICATION OF THE NEW JERSEY EXPERIMENT RESULTS

The final volume of the three-volume series on *The New Jersey Income Maintenance Experiment* will be out in early December, and Volumes I and II have already been published. It thus seems appropriate to include in this issue of FOCUS an overview of the experiment and its results.

Background and History

The New Jersey Income-Maintenance Experiment was the first largescale social experiment in the United States. It involved the systematic variation of certain economic influences (the "treatment") on a group of persons as they went about their everyday lives, and a comparison of their resulting behavior with the behavior of a control

group that was similar to the first group in every way except that its members did not receive the treatment. Today, there are in operation several similar federally funded, controlled social experiments,¹ but in 1966 and 1967, testing economic hypotheses in this manner was a new idea.

The treatment consisted of the negative income tax. This is a cash transfer system of income supplementation in which the benefit depends on two attributes of the system—the guarantee (the benefit level when other income is zero) and the tax rate (the rate at which benefits are reduced as other income increases), and two attributes of the family—the level of other income and the size of the family.

The experiment was in operation from August 1968 through September 1972. It was conducted by the Institute for Research on Poverty and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., a research firm based in Princeton, New Jersey.

Originally enrolled were 1216 families with incomes below 150 percent of the poverty line—725 in the various experimental groups and 491 in the control group. (An additional 141 families were added to the control group

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The purpose of FOCUS is to acquaint a wide audience with the work of the Institute for Research on Poverty, by means of short essays on selected pieces of research.

The material in any one issue is, of course, just a small sample of what is being done at the Institute. It is our hope that these summaries will whet the appetite of the reader to learn more about the research itself, and more about other research on poverty—an area of vital social concern—by Institute staff.

The views expressed are those of individual members of the Institute; they do not represent the position of the Institute for Research on Poverty, the University of Wisconsin, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, or other funding agencies.

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THE NEW JERSEY INCOME-MAINTENANCE EXPERIMENT, volume 1: *Operations, Surveys, and Administration*. David Kershaw and Jerilyn Fair, editors. Academic Press, \$15.00

THE NEW JERSEY INCOME-MAINTENANCE EXPERIMENT, volume 2: *Labor-Supply Responses*. Harold W. Watts and Albert Rees, editors. Academic Press, \$28.50

THE NEW JERSEY INCOME-MAINTENANCE EXPERIMENT, volume 3: *Expenditures, Health, and Social Behavior; and the Quality of the Evidence*. Harold W. Watts and Albert Rees, editors. Academic Press, forthcoming in December 1977

later.) The families were enrolled sequentially in four sites, as follows:

August 1968	Trenton, New Jersey
January 1969	Paterson-Passaic, New Jersey
June 1969	Jersey City, New Jersey
September 1969	Scranton, Pennsylvania

Each site was in operation for three years.

The families were selected for participation according to an income-stratified, random sample design. To be eligible, families had to consist of at least two persons, of whom one was an able-bodied man of working age. Obviously, this intentionally restricted the sample almost entirely to the so-called intact working poor and near-poor families. Eight negative income tax plans were tested; they comprised various combinations of four guarantee (maximum benefit) levels and three tax (benefit reduction) rates, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
The Negative Income Tax Plans
Used in the New Jersey Experiment

Guarantee (percent of poverty line)	Tax Rate (percent)		
	30	50	70
50	x	x	
75	x	x	x
100		x	x
125		x	

Volume I

The first volume begins with a foreword to the three-volume series by Robert J. Lampman, an Institute economist who participated in the initial planning of the war on poverty. He describes the sequence of events leading up to the decision by the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to fund such an experiment. Briefly, OEO had advocated a national negative income tax as early as 1965, had been unable to persuade the President to introduce the legislation and, as a fallback position, had decided to fund a project that would produce hard evidence as to its feasibility. This evidence, it was too confidently presumed, could then persuade politicians and the American public that a negative income tax would be good social policy.

Volume I is the nontechnical volume in the series. It contains a general description of the experimental design and results, and the specifics of the operations, surveys, and administrative rules and procedures of the experiment. It also includes anecdotal evidence that the "experimentals," the "controls," and the interviewers were, indeed, human beings. Representative examples:

Reasons for refusal:

"He's a proud young man who finally insisted he didn't believe in taking money for nothing."

"He (Puerto Rican) does not like America—has gotten into too much trouble signing things. His wife got him into this and he wants out."

"Too tired to sign."

Tracking down families:

"The warmest clue we got came from a very alert elderly woman who is now living at the address we have for Mr. _____. She told us that quite a few months ago a guy walked by and shouted up to her how could she stand it up there with all those roaches. The woman seems to think that was Mr. _____. For a lack of anything better to think we think it was too."

"Refused. Dark stairwell and vicious dog did not allow interviewer to make notes on dwelling or occupants."

"After verbally sparring with some of Mrs. _____'s neighbors and having them scrutinize me with deft feline caution, I was directed to the candy store on the corner. While talking with the woman at the candy store it became quite apparent that she wasn't going to say anything until I whispered, 'I'll take care of you if Mrs. _____ calls me.' Ten minutes later Mrs. _____ called. Shopkeepers are in it for the money."

Final letters

"I miss our little get-togethers once a month by mail. I trust our reports will help somehow in the future of our government. I expect to have a larger knitting class next month and the tupperware will pick up in the fall. So for now and always, every blessing to you and yours."

"I got the report this week. And, I did not get the check. Is this the last report I will have to fill out? I enjoyed every cent I got. Thank you very kindly."

Volume I also recounts major occasions when the experiment collided with political reality.

County welfare authorities alleged that certain experimental families had received payments from the experiment and welfare payments simultaneously, thus defrauding the welfare system. Resulting difficulties included a subpoena served on the field director of the experiment ordering him to produce family records the experiment had pledged to keep confidential, and a payment to county officials to compensate local welfare authorities for the overlapping payments that did occur.

Federal politics in the form of Nixon's Family Assistance plan impinged on the experiment between 1969 and 1972. Experiment staff testified before Congress. The General Accounting Office issued an analysis very critical of our early results, and undertook their own investigation of the data despite strong protests from the experiment's staff and OEO. The Senate Finance Committee requested individual family records, which again plunged the experiment into the issue of confidentiality.

Volume I, in addition, includes discussion of why the families who dropped out of the experiment chose to do so; how well the income reports submitted to the experiment by the families matched their income tax returns

(continued on page 12)

POLITICAL LANGUAGE

by
Roberta Kimmel

While much social science research of the past few decades has focused on policy formation aimed at reducing economic and social inequalities, surprisingly little effort has been devoted to questioning why such a large number of unsuccessful policies have come into being, and how these dramatic inequalities have been so steadfastly perpetuated. *Political Language: Words that Succeed and Policies that Fail*, a new Institute for Research on Poverty Monograph by Murray Edelman, offers an original and provocative analysis of these issues.

Language and the Formation of Beliefs

"Chronic social problems, recurring beliefs about them, and recurring language forms that justify their acceptance reinforce each other. Only rarely can there be direct observations of events, and even then language forms shape that meaning of what the general public and government officials see."

The study is founded on a broad epistemological base that explores how patterns of beliefs are formed. It examines the evocation of perceptions about poverty and related social problems that are nonempirically based, through the language employed in everyday discussion and analysis of these problems. The reliance of elites and nonelites alike on what the author describes as symbolically engendered cognitive structures has profound consequences for public policy.

Author Murray Edelman, a professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin, has had a longstanding interest in political symbolism. In *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (1964) he examined the way in which elites structure the expectations mass publics have of them and contribute significantly to the accepting relationship of people to authority itself. In *Politics as Symbolic Language* (1971) symbolic elements engendering rebellion and escalation of conflict were scrutinized. The present study utilizes a similar approach: that is, analysis of the role of symbols by examining their recurring and persisting links to observable political behaviors that vary with social situations and with changes in significant symbols, rather than with empirically based observations.

The data for the analysis consist of (1) common terms, metaphors, and other everyday figures of speech as they appear in the statements of public officials, of government agencies, in media accounts and interest group literature, (2) terms employed in relevant professional articles and economic analyses, and (3) public actions and reactions to them that commonly recur.

The Language of the Helping Professions

It is, Edelman maintains, through linguistic devices and public gestures that complex and unfounded assumptions

POLITICAL LANGUAGE: WORDS THAT SUCCEED AND POLICIES THAT FAIL

by

Murray Edelman

Academic Press, \$12.50 (\$4.95 paper)

regarding social issues are evoked in people's minds. The challenge resides in discovering the process by which language and gestures are transformed into these myths. His method is to examine everyday reactions to chronic social problems by analyzing the explanations and actions used to cope with them. He concentrates on public officials and on the authority, language, and ideology of the "helping professions"—psychiatry, social work, and teaching—because of their obvious influence on beliefs and political actions relevant to poverty and related ills, and also because they "exemplify the tie between language and cognition in a way that is readily accessible to observation and analysis." These professions are particularly revealing in the terms they use to categorize events and justify restrictive courses of action in order to define and defend hierarchies of power.

Consider how the most common of activities—exercising, talking, and even reading, are labelled as "therapy"—dance therapy, recreation therapy, group therapy, bibliotherapy. When constraining acts are brought under the rubrics of education, therapy, or rehabilitation they are thereby converted into altruistic ones.

"To label a common activity as though it were a medical one is to establish superior and subordinate roles, to make it clear who gives orders and who takes them, and to justify in advance the inhibitions placed upon the subordinate class."

Besides defining and maintaining status and power hierarchies, according to Edelman, the language of the helping professions can also serve to enlarge authority. As attention is diverted from the economic and social roots of a problem, their own base of power can be broadened. Just one of the forms this takes is construing the absence of deviant behavior as a precursor of it. In psychiatric literature one reads of the "prepsychotic"; social work literature makes reference to the "predelinquent." "Attention is hence focused on prevention and control, and diverted from the link between poverty and delinquency." Such terminology also instills confidence in the professional's ability to predict those who will exhibit antisocial behavior in the future and those who will not.

The use of a special symbolic language to effect social conformity and discourage criticism is not, however,

unique to this group. It is also characteristic of much bureaucratic language.

The Language of Bureaucracy

The language of bureaucracy often serves to perpetuate basically ineffective organizations. The survival of administrative agencies seems, on occasion, to depend more on public anxiety about the problems they are dealing with than on their performance.

“Language shapes what administrators and the public take for granted, whose expectations they accept as legitimate and whose they ignore, how they define their functions, and what meanings they read into the outcomes of their policies.”

Because of conflicting goals or ambiguous language, evaluations of controversial organizations often reveal nothing about those organizations’ effectiveness. Vague objectives—“national security,” “decent housing”—can produce evaluations that exaggerate both utility of services and results. The more concrete the terms that are used to describe their objectives, the greater the conflict and more ineffective they are likely to appear.

Social Adjustment through Contradictory Beliefs

The flavor of Edelman’s style of argumentation can be illustrated by what he describes as social adjustment through contradictory beliefs.

The most common cognitive reactions to poverty fall into one of two alternative patterns. The first pattern sees the poor as responsible for their predicament and in need of control “to compensate for their [alleged] inadequacies, greed, lack of self-discipline, immorality. . . .” This view is often espoused by legislators and administrators who oppose increases in welfare benefits, and by traditional psychiatrists and social workers, among others.

The alternative view sees the poor as victims, deprived through social, political, and economic exploitation rather than personal defects. Liberal politicians and helping professionals are the likely proponents of this pattern.

While most people will choose one of these two as the dominant theory, they learn to perceive both, in Edelman’s view, utilizing each as it suits a particular purpose. This not only expresses individual ambivalence, but also fosters contradictions in political rhetoric and in public policy. The language in which both explanations are couched encourages quiescent public acceptance of poverty as a fact of life. To perceive poverty in terms of the inadequacies of the poor is to treat its symptoms, while the categories used to define it in terms of the functioning of economic, social, and political institutions—the “system” and “economic law”—make the battle appear futile.

Political Constraint through Symbolic Reassurance

How is it, Edelman asks, that governments can pursue policies that are unsuccessful, and even at times contradictory to the values those very policies are supposed to

support? How is it that rhetoric on peace and disarmament is abundant, for instance; yet disarmament conferences do not make significant headway and the defense budget continues to take a major portion of the national coffer?

“It is *language* about political events rather than the events themselves that everyone experiences; the unintended consequences of actions and language are often more important than the intended ones; and conventional observation and conventional research methods (notably opinion and attitude research) chiefly tell us which symbols are currently powerful, not what ‘reality’ is.”

Why, in the area of consumer protection, have many measures proven to have far greater symbolic than substantive value; and how is it that regulatory agencies and public utility commissions end up serving, at least in part, the ends of the business groups they “regulate”? Once these bodies have become cued as being benevolent, or their specific officials have become cued as consumer advocates, their ineffective actions or counterproductive results often fade into obscurity.

People want to believe in the integrity and efficacy of their government, says Edelman. So they accept a degree of ambivalence that permits continuation of the policies that engender the ambivalence. To do otherwise would mean a political life filled with protest and resistance, a strain few wish to accept.

“The overwhelming majority want to believe that their own roles are meaningful contributions to a greater good, and so have good reason to accept the reassuring perspective on public affairs, rather than one that upsets both their belief in institutions they have supported and their belief in themselves.”

Conclusion

The most serious issues for Edelman are not the ones that involve conscious deception, although such cases are certainly significant for their public policy implications and interesting from the standpoint of scientific analysis. Rather, he is most deeply concerned about authorities who are as involved in their symbolism as the nonelites under their dominance. The kinds of linguistic symbolism explored in *Political Language* both perpetuate inequalities that would not otherwise be tolerated and ensure mass acceptance of ineffective or harmful political policies. The economic, social, and psychological consequences of governmental measures to deal with poverty are sometimes themselves major contributors to poverty and related problems. Recent history has shown that, for relatively powerless groups, resistance can and frequently has brought benefits. The mythical perceptions that our political language engenders present potent (although not insurmountable) deterrents to such resistance.

* * *

AN UPDATE OF THE POVERTY PICTURE PLUS A NEW LOOK AT RELATIVE TAX BURDENS

by

Harold Watts and Felicity Skidmore

Many government programs alter the incomes of individuals and families and/or their command over goods and services in a very direct way. The following list comprises the major federal and state tax and transfer programs that take money directly from or transfer cash or in-kind benefits directly to the population:

Social Insurance Cash Transfers

Social Security and Railroad Retirement
Government Employee Pensions
Unemployment Insurance
Worker's Compensation
Veteran's Benefits (non-income-conditioned)

Cash Assistance

Veteran's Pensions (income-conditioned)
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)

In-Kind Transfers

Food Stamps
Child Nutrition
Housing Assistance
Medicare
Medicaid

Income and Payroll Taxes

Federal Individual Income Tax
Federal Social Security Tax (employee share)
State Individual Income Taxes

Clearly, only a small number of these would usually be referred to as welfare.

To get a proper picture of the amount of redistribution currently done by government, the appropriate procedure is to take into account the effect of all these programs.¹ This inclusive assessment also provides the necessary framework within which to identify the gainers and losers from the current system and to judge who needs help from tax-and-transfer reform (of which "welfare" reform, as usually discussed, is only a small part).

Impact on Poverty

The impact of government on reducing poverty when the effects of all these programs are taken into account is substantial—and substantially greater than is shown by the government's own poverty measure, which only counts the effect of the cash transfer programs. Table 1 shows the before and after picture estimated for 1976. The poverty count is seen to be much reduced by the tax-and-transfer system.

Cash transfers as counted in the official poverty figures almost halve the overall poverty count compared with pretransfer poverty (reducing it from 21 percent of all persons to 11.4 percent). When taxes and in-kind transfers are included, the poverty count is again almost halved (going from 11.4 percent to 6.5 percent). The poverty-reducing effect of the programs taken together as a system

is substantially greater than the effect of cash transfers alone for all age, regional and demographic groups.

But the relative effects of the system do differ by group. These effects are not shown in the tables but are worth noting. Before taxes and transfers, for instance, 27 percent of the poor are aged. Only 7.5 percent of the poor are aged when all program effects are taken into account. Other groups, in contrast, become more prominent in the after-tax-and-transfer statistics. Of the pretransfer poor, 43 percent are under 25; the proportion under 25 rises to 55 percent when all programs have been taken into account. The South has 33 percent of the national population, 41 percent of the preprogram poor, and 56 percent of the poor after all programs have been accounted for. One out of eight Americans is nonwhite, but one out of four of the poor is nonwhite—both before and after the impact of public policy.

Changes in Income Shares

Obviously, redistributive public policy has dramatic effects on the income of many poor persons. This redistribution, of course, is at someone's expense. Without also including in our calculations the sources of the money to be redistributed, we do not get a picture of the overall effect of government redistributive policy. Table 2 shows, for

Table 1
Estimated Impact of Public Programs on the Poverty
Population in Fiscal Year 1976

	Number of Persons (millions)	Percentage Poor		
		Before Programs	After Cash ^a Transfers	After All Programs
Age groups				
Persons under 25 years	95.8	20.4	14.6	8.1
Persons 25-64 years	98.3	14.1	8.1	5.3
Persons 65 years and older	22.9	54.1	12.8	4.6
All persons	217.0	21.1	11.4	6.5
Poverty-prone groups				
Mothers with children	19.0	58.4	41.8	14.0
Families with aged head	27.2	53.7	13.5	5.6
Nonwhite units	27.6	40.8	27.6	13.0
Units in South	71.4	26.5	16.6	11.0
Single persons	21.6	47.8	25.0	17.0

Note: The age groups taken together are exhaustive. The poverty-prone groups as shown in this table are overlapping categories.

Source: The estimates in Tables 1, 3, 4, and 5 are calculated from computer printouts of data prepared for the Congressional Budget Office by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. The same basic data were used in the CBO's June 1977 Background Paper no. 17, *Poverty Status of Families under Alternative Definitions of Income*.

^aThe figures in this column are comparable to the government poverty statistics. In calendar year 1975, 12.3 percent of the population were poor by the government definition (analogous to the 11.4 percent figure for 1976 in this table).

fiscal year 1976, the estimated impact of overall government redistribution on the relative income shares of the bottom 20 percent, the top 20 percent, and the three middle quintiles. The first column shows the shares of personal income that go to each income group *before* the effect of taxes and transfers. As is obvious, these shares are extremely uneven, with half the total income going to the richest 20 percent and less than half of one percent to the bottom 20 percent.

The middle column shows the relative shares that accrue when the cash transfer programs (social insurance cash transfers, and cash assistance) are taken into account. This is the way the government officially defines income. Some minor lessening of inequality has resulted. Very roughly, 4.5 percent has been taken from the top and added to the bottom; and 2 percent has been taken from the medium high income group and given to the medium low one.

When positive taxes and in-kind transfers are also included (as they are in the third column) we see some additional equalizing, with another 4.5 percentage points going from the top group to the bottom two. The middle group's share remains remarkably constant throughout. But, when all is said and done, the top 20 percent are still left with more than twice "their (proportional) share," and six times as much as the poorest group.

Although the changes in income shares appear modest, large sums are involved in bringing these changes about. Table 3 presents an accounting of the income shifts among the different demographic groups. Nearly \$142 billion is collected from higher income individuals and families—none of which comes net *from* the aged. Of this, \$119 billion is redistributed to the lower income groups, nearly two-thirds of which goes to the aged.

The aged are revealed to be doing, relatively speaking, very well indeed. The aged in the higher income groups have higher average incomes than similar nonaged units, although they have smaller family sizes and pay almost no taxes. The aged in the lower income groups are similarly

Table 3
Income Changes among Groups
Due to the Tax and Transfer System

	Number of Persons (millions)	Preprogram Income (\$billions)	Postprogram Income (\$billions)	Net Change (\$billions)
Lower income families ^a				
Aged	15.10	25.5	68.5	+ 43.0
Nonaged	74.00	156.3	193.7	+ 37.4
Lower income individuals ^a				
Aged	7.15	8.6	39.2	+ 30.6
Nonaged	8.28	23.6	31.6	+ 8.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>104.53</i>	<i>214.0</i>	<i>333.0</i>	<i>+ 119.0</i>
Higher income families				
Aged	4.14	44.2	44.2	- 0
Nonaged	102.23	711.7	586.6	-125.1
Higher income individuals				
Aged	.79	14.3	14.3	0
Nonaged	5.35	79.2	62.5	- 16.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>112.51</i>	<i>849.4</i>	<i>707.6</i>	<i>- 141.8</i>

^aLower income is defined as under \$14,000 for family units and under \$7900 for individuals.

avored. They have much larger transfers, also, despite small family sizes.²

The Relation between Income and Impact

How does the system affect the various types of families at different income levels? Table 4 shows, for various aged and nonaged groups, the average net benefit or tax liability at different income levels. As can be seen, none of the aged on average pay positive taxes except the richest 20 percent (that is, those with annual family incomes over \$21,700). Nonaged couples with and without children, in contrast, on average pay positive taxes when their incomes reach \$7400. The very poorest groups (those with annual incomes below \$1800) all receive on average substantial positive payments, but here again there are interesting differences. Aged poor couples (families in which by definition there are few children) receive a larger average sum than either poor couples with children or poor mothers with children.

These are the absolute amounts. Now we can ask: At what rates do these benefits decline as income rises? Table 5 presents the amounts that are lost in reduced benefits and/or increased taxes per dollar in moving from the average receipts of one group to the average for the next highest group—often referred to as marginal tax (or benefit reduction) rates. (A rate of 40 percent, for example, means that families which differ by \$1000 in preprogram earnings differ, on average, by only \$600 in postprogram income or command over goods and services.) These rates vary widely. The poorest mothers with children face a marginal rate of 58 percent, compared with marginal rates of 22-35 percent for those in the medium high groups and even lower average rates for the highest groups.

Table 2

Impact on Income Shares of Households

Quintile	Share of Market Income	Share of Income after Cash Transfers	Share of Income after Taxes and All Transfers
Lowest 20%	0.3%	4.5%	7.2%
Medium Low 20%	7.2	9.6	11.5
Middle 20%	16.3	16.2	16.6
Medium High 20%	26.0	24.2	23.4
Highest 20%	50.2	45.6	41.3

Note: Households include families and unrelated individuals ranked irrespective of family size. Six out of seven in the lowest (pre-tax-and-transfer) quintile are either aged households, single person units, or female-headed families with children. Nine out of ten in the top quintile are nonaged, multiperson households.

Source: Congressional Budget Office, *Poverty Status of Families under Alternative Definitions of Income*, Background Paper no. 17, June 1977, p. 24.

Table 4
Net Impact Per Unit, by Income Class

	Number of units (millions)	Income Class				
		Lowest (under \$1800)	Medium Low (\$1801-\$7900)	Middle (\$7901-\$14,000)	Medium High (\$14,001-\$21,700)	Highest (over \$21,700)
Aged groups						
Couples	6.10	\$7315	\$6894	\$ 5049	\$3454	\$-3911
Single persons	7.96	4441	3750	2474	440	-6087
Nonaged groups						
Couples with children	27.24	5144	2595	- 244	-2259	-6385
Couples without children	14.25	5114	2343	- 366	-2516	-7260
Single persons	13.63	2070	135	-1783	-3596	-9400
Mothers with children	5.22	5565	3047	406	- 731	-4655

Note: Tax liability is indicated by (-).

Table 5
Impact Rates, by Income Class

	Income Class				
	Lowest (under \$1800)	Medium Low (\$1801-\$7900)	Middle (\$7901-\$14,000)	Medium High (\$14,001-\$21,700)	Highest (over \$21,700)
Aged groups					
Couples	11%	29%	24%	31%	10%
Single persons	18	23	30	32	16
Nonaged groups					
Couples with children	41	48	32	27	19
Couples without children	52	44	33	29	21
Single persons	44	33	29	35	28
Mothers with children	58	46	18	22	13

Note: These are marginal rates (explicit and implicit) for all income classes except the highest (for which, being open-ended, we can only calculate average rates). They are the rates faced by each group as a whole. See Qualification 1 at the end of this article.

Implications for Reform

Subject to certain important qualifications (spelled out in the final section), Tables 4 and 5 may be construed as giving us the dimensions of the current tax and transfer system viewed as a universal credit income tax. Table 4 shows the average benefits or taxes of each group in each income category. Table 5 shows the implicit tax rates (the rate at which the average benefit falls as income rises).

The view underlying this way of presenting the facts, of course, is that at present we do, in fact, have a redistribution system with many parts. Any reform should be coordinated among all of them. In other words, don't redraw a part of the elephant without seeing what it does to the picture as a whole. This, in turn, implies that the appropriate criterion is the combined impact of all parts of the system—whether in fact it is simplified into one program called a credit income tax or whether it is, as now, made up of many different ones. Looked at in this way, several features stand out.

First, the relative treatment of aged and nonaged poor families suggests a need for careful examination of priorities. The older units have higher "guarantees" despite the presence of children in the younger units. Moreover, older units have lower implicit and explicit tax rates, which are hard to justify on incentive grounds. Among the highest income groups, the much lower net tax burden for the aged is startling.

Second, even within the nonaged groups the treatment of couples with children seems comparatively stingy. Such families receive almost no preference relative to childless couples, despite their having twice as many mouths to feed. Relative to single mothers with children, intact families end up with distinctly less at each level of pretransfer income and have generally one more male adult to provide for. These patterns reflect the often noted neglect of the "working poor" in the lower quintiles, but the pattern appears to persist at higher income levels as well.³

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FORTHCOMING INSTITUTE BOOKS

Fall 1977

Maurice MacDonald, *Food, Stamps, and Income Maintenance*

This monograph examines the timely issue of the role of the Food Stamp program in our income maintenance system. The author evaluates the effects of the program on recipient well-being, related benefits for taxpayers, and consequences for the food industry. While advancing our practical understanding of the relative merits of providing cash versus in-kind transfers, the study also helps to promote informed decisions about the future of the program and offers some general insights for government food aid policy.

Harold W. Watts and Albert Rees, editors, *THE NEW JERSEY INCOME-MAINTENANCE EXPERIMENT*, volume 3: Expenditures, Health, and Social Behavior; and the Quality of the Evidence

See article on page 1.

Winter 1978

Irwin Garfinkel and Robert Haveman, with the assistance of David Betson, *Earnings Capacity, Poverty, and Inequality*

Based on the judgment that the current income measure of economic status is likely to be misleading for policy purposes, the authors of this book have attempted to define a more comprehensive measure which they call "earnings capacity." This measure indicates the amount of income that a household could generate if its capabilities were fully used. On the basis of this definition, they have estimated the earnings capacity of a national sample of American households. These estimates are employed in identifying the composition of the poor population, in evaluating the target-effectiveness of alternative income support programs, in appraising how various groups utilize their earnings capacity, and in measuring the magnitude of the effect of labor market discrimination on black incomes.

This study thus has consequences for research and policy, and stimulates reexamination of both social policy goals and social science practices.

Spring 1978

Irwin Garfinkel and Stanley H. Masters, *Estimating Labor Supply Effects of Income Maintenance Alternatives*

The importance of labor supply issues in evaluating income maintenance alternatives is a primary motive for the work presented in this volume. The authors have carefully designed empirical estimates of income, wage, and substitution effects and show how these estimates can be used to simulate the effects of various negative income tax, wage subsidy, and earnings subsidy proposals.

This monograph lays the technical groundwork for a companion volume, *Welfare Reform and the Work Disincentive Issue*, which will relate the results of the present volume to policy alternatives.

Joel F. Handler, Ellen Jane Hollingsworth, and Howard S. Erlanger, *Lawyers and the Pursuit of Legal Rights*

This monograph takes a detailed look at the role of the federally funded Legal Services Program, particularly its effect on the law profession's provision of services to the poor. The authors have based their study largely on interviews with lawyers in both legal services programs and private practice settings. What emerges is a picture of varied activity, of a profession experiencing some flexibility with changes reaching beyond the Legal Services Program itself. The result has been an increasing interest in legal needs by other institutions and the private bar. The authors caution, however, that if newly structured opportunities are not made available to the legal profession, legal rights activities will decline in importance for a large portion of the bar, and a major opportunity to increase the rights of groups underrepresented in the legal system will be lost.

These books will be available from the publisher, Academic Press, 111 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10003.



VISITING SCHOLARS PROGRAM,
1977-1978

The year 1977-78 will see a major expansion in the Institute's Visiting Scholars program. These Visitors, who augment our regular staff, are researchers on leave from their permanent affiliations to pursue poverty-related research. Some come with their own funds; some are funded by the Institute.

The primary emphasis of the program is on inviting researchers from other countries, particularly industrialized European nations interested in problems of low-income populations. A major purpose is to promote exchange of ideas and information, and thus stimulate comparative analyses of poverty issues. An expanded

Gunnar Myrdal, Economics and Sociology
Institute for International Economics
University of Stockholm
Stockholm, Sweden
Research: *Update of his 1944 book, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy.*

Alva Myrdal, Sociology
Former Swedish Ambassador to India, Burma, and Ceylon;
Cabinet Minister; Member of Parliament; Member of
Swedish delegation to U.N.
Stockholm, Sweden
Research: *Family planning.*

James J. Heckman, Economics
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois
Research: *Labor supply.*

Manuel Castells, Sociology
Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales
Sorbonne
Paris, France
Research: *Comparative analysis of the development of grassroots movements concerning the delivery of public goods in France, Spain and Italy, 1968-1977.*

Robert Davis, Sociology
A & T State University
Greensboro, North Carolina
Research: *Black suicide; School desegregation.*

Jeffrey Fitzgerald, Sociology and Legal Studies
LaTrobe University
Bundoora, Victoria, Australia
Research: *Block busting, red lining, and court procedures to outlaw them.*

W. Irwin Gillespie, Economics
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Research: *Income distribution.*

international perspective will encourage application of lessons from foreign experience to poverty policy in the United States, and vice versa. For this reason the Institute encourages visits not only by prominent scholars in particular poverty-related fields, but also by academics with experience in government.

The researchers listed below will be Visitors to the Institute for periods ranging from two months to a year. Every effort is made to enable them to participate in the intellectual life not only of the Institute but of the whole university community.

Joop Hartog, Economics
Erasmus University (formerly Netherlands School of Economics)
Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Research: *Measurement and testing of selected elements of the multicapability theory using U.S. data.*

Walter Korpi, Social Policy
The Swedish Institute for Social Research
University of Stockholm
Stockholm, Sweden
Research: *Contribution of social policy to the reduction of poverty and inequality in an international context.*

Jerzy Janusz Kropiwnicki, Political Economy
University of Lodz
Lodz, Poland
Research: *Study of the strategies adopted in the war on poverty and its success as evaluated in the American press.*

Rudolf Meidner, Economic Councillor
Swedish Federation of Trade Unions (LO)
Stockholm, Sweden
Research: *Manpower, wages, profit sharing, and poverty.*

Joseph F. Quinn, Economics
Boston College
Boston, Massachusetts
Research: *Disability; The microeconomic determinants of retirement.*

Samuel A. Rea, Jr., Economics
University of Toronto
Toronto, Canada
Research: *Universal disability insurance; Unemployment insurance and the determinants of labor supply.*

Gordon W. Ternowetsky, Sociology
LaTrobe University
Bundoora, Victoria, Australia
Research: *Income maintenance and poverty.*

Jacques van der Gaag, Econometrics
Economics Institute
University of Leiden
Leiden, The Netherlands
Research: *Econometric modeling of health care systems.*

Update of the poverty picture
(continued from page 7)

Third, the average implicit tax rates in the richest quintile for all the demographic groups (see Table 5) suggest that the burden on those with the highest incomes is far short of "confiscatory," and certainly is smaller than a casual look at tax schedules might suggest.⁴

Qualifications

1. These measures are, of course, averages over large groups of households. Different households are affected differently according to the set of programs they are eligible for *and* according to the subset that they participate in. The schedules shown in Tables 4 and 5 are, thus, much smoother than reality.
2. Social insurance programs are not directly conditioned on income because they are aimed at providing income security against the threat of specific income-reducing events—retirement, disability, death, illness. This consolidation of the social income programs into an accidental "pseudocredit income tax" conditioned strictly on income ignores their original rationale.
3. The consolidation of Medicare as in-kind social insurance and Medicaid as an in-kind, income-tested benefit might be challenged unless the employment-

related private subsidies for health insurance are included as well. Such inclusion would probably have the net effect of reducing further the relative burden on the high income groups.

4. However much a consolidated impact schedule might resemble a unified negative income tax or credit income tax schedule, the fact that many programs are involved—each with its own rules, regulations, *and* personnel—means administrative overhead costs of substantial magnitude. It may be argued that such costs are the inevitable result of the political coalitions needed to achieve any redistribution at all. They should, in any case, be recognized as waste relative to the potential efficiency of a more unified system of income supports.

⁴Such calculations were released by the Congressional Budget Office in *Poverty Status of Families Under Alternative Definitions of Income*, Background Paper no. 17, June 1977. The basic methodology used in the paper for including in-kind programs in the income distribution statistics was developed not by the CBO but by Timothy Smeeding in *Measuring the Economic Welfare of Low Income Households and the Anti-Poverty Effectiveness of Cash and Non-Cash Transfer Programs*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975.

²Further calculations show that, on a per capita basis, aged households poor on a preprogram basis are raised by the tax and transfer system to income levels more than double those for preprogram poor nonaged families with children (\$4500 versus \$2000).

³If education is considered an in-kind transfer, and there are good arguments in favor of its inclusion, the position of families with children improves in relation to that of childless units. Its inclusion would not improve the relative position of two-parent families vis-à-vis one-parent families. Nor is it clear that it would improve the position of the poor relative to the rest of the population.

⁴Corporate taxes, property taxes, and sales taxes are not included in our calculations. There is no general agreement on the real incidence of these taxes, or how their inclusion would change relative burdens.

THE TREATMENT OF ASSETS AND INCOME FROM ASSETS IN INCOME-CONDITIONED PROGRAMS

Prepared for the Federal Council on the Aging by
the Institute for Research on Poverty

CONTENTS

1. Overview: Issues and Choices on Asset Testing *Robert Lampman*
2. The Treatment of Assets in Cash Benefit Programs for the Aged and Disabled *Marilyn Moon*
3. Income, Asset and Work Tests in Transfer Programs for Able-bodied, Nonaged Individuals *Irene Lurie*
4. Rules and Practices for the Taxation of Income and Assets in Income-Like Subsidies for Housing, Medical Care, and Higher Education *Leonard J. Hausman*
5. Treatment of Assets and Property Income in Designs for Negative Income Taxation *Robert I. Lerman*
6. Housing Assets as Potential Income: Implications for Income-Conditioned Programs *Yung-Ping Chen*
7. The Treatment of Wealth in Means-Tested Transfer Programs *Michael K. Taussig*

Copies of this publication are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

SELECTED BOOKS AND PAPERS

Marilyn Moon, *The Measurement of Economic Welfare: Its Application to the Aged Poor*. New York: Academic Press, 1977.

Irene Lurie, ed., *Integrating Income Maintenance Programs*. New York: Academic Press, 1975.

Marilyn Moon and Eugene Smolensky, "Income, Economic Status, and Policy toward the Aged," Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper no. 350-76.

Robert J. Lampman, "Scaling Welfare Benefits to Income: An Idea That Is Being Overworked." *Policy Analysis* 1: 1-10. Institute for Research on Poverty Reprint no. 145.

Robert J. Lampman, "How Much Does the American System of Transfers Benefit the Poor?" In *Economic Progress and Social Welfare*, ed. Leonard Goodman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966). Institute for Research on Poverty Reprint no. 6.

Timothy Smeeding, "The Antipoverty Effectiveness of In-Kind Transfers," *Journal of Human Resources* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1977): 360-377. Forthcoming Institute for Research on Poverty Reprint.

MICROECONOMIC MODELS FOR SIMULATION OF THE SECTORAL AND DISTRIBUTIONAL EFFECTS OF PUBLIC POLICIES

A Conference Jointly Sponsored by

The Institute for Research on Poverty
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
The National Science Foundation

March 1978, Washington, D.C.

Many microeconomic models have been recently developed whose purpose is to estimate detailed sectoral and income distributional impacts of various public policies. These include models developed at Brookings, the Poverty Institute, Mathematica Policy Research and the Urban Institute, and government agencies. But the literature on these models is scant, and a lack of communication among researchers who construct them has resulted in substantial overlap of effort and very little discussion of the priorities in extending and updating them.

Consequently, the objectives of this conference are threefold: (1) initiation of communication among the builders of such models; (2) dissemination of information to policymakers and the academic community on the use of computer models in specific policy applications; and (3) systematic appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the various models, the reliability of their results, and the possibilities for interchange of components. This last objective, it is hoped, will benefit from the participation of individuals who are not themselves involved in the construction and use of such models.

The organizers of the conference are Professor Robert Haveman of the Department of Economics and Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin; and Dr. Kevin Hollenbeck, of Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. It is anticipated that there will be approximately ten to fifteen presenters, an equal number of discussants, and several invited participants from government, research, and the academic community.

The conference papers and discussants' comments will later be published.

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Newly Published Institute Monographs

THE MEASUREMENT OF ECONOMIC WELFARE: ITS APPLICATION TO THE AGED POOR

Marilyn Moon

This is a timely addition to both the literature on poverty and the general literature on measurement of economic status. Given the large percentage of the aged who live with their children, perhaps Moon's most important and innovative contribution is her adjustment for transfers *within* the family. She also shows that the rankings of different groups of the aged (black, white, working, nonworking) varies according to which definition of economic status is used.

Academic Press, \$13.50

PUBLIC EXPENDITURES, TAXES, AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME: THE U.S., 1950, 1961, 1970

Morgan Reynolds and Eugene Smolensky

In this book, Reynolds and Smolensky examine whether the "post-fisc" distribution of income (incomes minus taxes plus government services) was distributed more equally in 1970 than in 1960 or in 1950. The authors conclude that although the pre-fisc income distribution was substantially less equal than the post-fisc distribution in each year, the post-fisc distribution itself changed very little over the period.

One of the strengths of the book is the authors' presentation of alternative assumptions and the data with which to test them, so the reader can see how sensitive their conclusions are to these alternative assumptions.

Academic Press, \$14.00

IMPROVING MEASURES OF ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Marilyn Moon and Eugene Smolensky

This volume is a collection of some of the most important articles by Institute staff on the measurement of economic status. While they have all (with one exception) been published elsewhere, taken together they constitute a substantial corpus of Institute work and a significant contribution to the literature in this area.

Academic Press, \$16.00

THE NEW JERSEY INCOME-MAINTENANCE EXPERIMENT, volume 2: Labor-Supply Responses

Harold W. Watts and Albert Rees, editors

See article on page 1.

POLITICAL LANGUAGE: WORDS THAT SUCCEED AND POLICIES THAT FAIL

Murray Edelman

See article on page 3.

Welfare Reform Alternatives

Recent Institute Special Reports Prepared for
the HEW Office of Income Security

SR 12 *Welfare Reform Alternatives: Employment Subsidy Proposals versus the Negative Income Tax*, by Robert Lerman

The employment subsidy approach to welfare reform is to provide jobs to poor people who are able to work and to provide income to those unable to work. The negative income tax approach is to extend to all types of families the principle that government grants should be conditioned only on family size and family income. One difficulty in comparing the two approaches is that employment subsidy plans differ among themselves almost as much as they differ from the negative income tax concept.

This report describes four different employment subsidy proposals and a negative income tax proposal. Essential differences in the philosophies underlying these proposals are highlighted. Detailed consideration is given to comparing how well each of the five would achieve several objectives—reducing poverty, maximizing equity, maximizing work incentives and work by recipients, and maximizing aggregate employment and aggregate production, to name but a few.

SR 13 *The Effects of Welfare Reform Alternatives on the Family*

The effects of welfare reform on the family are of great public policy interest. The number of female-headed families is increasing in relation to the total number of families in the U.S. Existing income maintenance programs, such as AFDC, incorporate numerous incentives for families to split, and most welfare reform proposals would also create such incentives.

This report explores the demography of female headship and reviews alternative theories of the effects of income on marital stability. The effects of income maintenance program provisions on family composition are discussed in terms of eligibility rules, unit definition, and benefit schedule; and various programs are compared. The report concludes with a review of the available evidence of program effects on marital stability, and the effects of marital stability on children.

Institute researchers Katharine Bradbury, Irv Garfinkel, Felicity Skidmore, James Sweet, Russell Middleton, Elaine Walster, Patricia Burdett, and John Bishop are the joint authors.

New Jersey Experiment

(continued from page 2)

as submitted to the Internal Revenue Service; and how the families reacted to the cessation of payments at the end of the experiment.

Volume II

Volume II provides technical analyses of the central findings of the experiment—the labor supply responses of the husbands, wives, teenagers, and the family as a whole. It also includes methodological expositions of the major statistical techniques used to deal with the time series and intermittent data problems inherent in this kind of data source.

Perhaps the most important result was that there was no widespread withdrawal from work on the part of the experimental group.

The payment levels over the three years show a mildly rising trend. In the first year, for example, the average four-week payment was \$91. In the third year this had increased to \$97. When it is remembered, however, that a cost-of-living correction was made to the payment levels every year—amounting to increases in the guarantee levels of 5.5 percent in September 1969, 5.9 percent in October 1970, and 4.1 percent in September 1971—and that, further, the experimental period was one of rising unemployment, the small extent of the increase in payments is evidence that there was no sharp decline in work effort nor substantial falsification of income reports.

Husbands' labor supply. The most important group for any national income maintenance policy, and the group the experiment was specifically designed to examine, is nonaged, able-bodied men with family responsibilities. These are the people with the most solid attachment to the labor force, and, therefore, the most labor to withdraw. These are the people about whom there is the most widespread fear that, given an income alternative, they will decide not to work.

As it turned out, the effect for this group was almost undetectable. Over the central two years of the experiment (the period least contaminated by start-up and end effects), the employment rate for male family heads in the experimental group was only 1.5 percent less than that for the controls. For the number of hours worked per week, the difference amounted to just over 2 percent.

Wives' labor supply. The group second in terms of policy interest is the wives. The average family size in the sample was six, so the wives in the experiment were, on average, mothers of four children. For this group, the differential between experimentals and controls was substantial, with experimental wives working 23 percent fewer hours per week than the controls, and their employment rate 24 percent lower. It should be noted that although this relative reduction is large, it is based on an average figure of only 4.4 hours a week for wives in the control group. So, from the point of view of family labor supply and national

costs it is not a great absolute change, and may be offset by important additions to work in the home.

Family labor supply. This brings us to total family labor supply—a composite of market work by the husband, the wife, and other adult family members. Predictably, these estimates lie between those for husbands and wives. Over the central two years, the number employed per family was 9.5 percent less for experimental families than for controls. The hours worked per week per family were 8.7 percent less for experimentals than for controls. This disincentive was almost entirely made up of relative work withdrawal by the wives, by teenagers who may have been enabled by the payments to stay in school longer, and by older workers who were able to take it a bit easier. These components of the disincentive effect may well be considered social benefits rather than costs.

The results showed a persistent difference in response according to ethnic group—white, black, and Spanish-speaking. Such disincentive as was found for husbands was restricted mainly to whites. The substantial disincentive for wives was also largely due to white wives. For both males and females, the Spanish-speaking group showed more disincentive than the blacks, who showed none. No satisfactory explanation has yet been found for this difference. It is apparent that black controls had an unusually bad labor market experience in the last year of the experiment, compared both with black experimentals and with the controls from the other two ethnic groups. Further analysis also shows some suggestion that blacks and whites were treated differently from each other by the local welfare authorities and that this is related to differences in their labor supply behavior.

Volume III

The final volume comprises technical analyses of the behavioral responses to the experiment other than work effort—responses in the areas of expenditures, health, and social behavior. It also includes discussion of how the introduction of AFDC-UP into New Jersey part way through the experiment may have affected the way the results should be interpreted. It contains a methodological exposition of the statistical design underlying the experiment. It discusses differences among the three series of income data that were collected. And it concludes with

a comprehensive discussion of how the site selection process, attrition pattern, and geographical area chosen for the experiment may have placed constraints on the generalizability of the results.

In the area of psychological and sociological responses, the effects were generally negligible. Cash assistance at the levels involved in this study does not appear to have a systematic effect on the recipients' self-esteem, social integration, or perceived quality of life, among many other variables. Nor does it appear to have an adverse effect on family composition, marital stability, or fertility rates. It does appear to affect the use of health care, causing somewhat greater utilization of private doctors in contrast to clinics—in other words, inducing more "middle-class" patterns of use.

What we can say with certainty is that the antipoverty effectiveness of the payments was not seriously vitiated by offsetting reductions in earnings due to reduced work effort. The benefits, therefore, represented a net increase in income, allowing these families greater command over material goods and services, and enhancing their economic well-being.

* * *

The availability of this three-volume series coincides with consideration of new initiatives for welfare reform at the federal level. The findings and experiences of this study have already informed and influenced the welfare reform "community." These volumes now make the results accessible to those who will be joining the debate.

The basic data from the experiment are also available for further analysis,² and these volumes provide documentation and evaluative information for researchers who wish to extend or challenge the basic results presented in them.

¹These consist of three other income maintenance experiments; a health insurance experiment; two housing allowance (demand and supply) experiments; and a special job creation demonstration (Supported Work).

²For information on how to obtain data tapes write to Michael Watts, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

In case of change of address, please send your old mailing label along with the new address.

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