**Income Security and Public Assistance for Woman and Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal:</th>
<th>Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article Title:</td>
<td>Income Security and Public Assistance for Woman and Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s):</td>
<td>Keith M. Kilty, Virginia E. Richardson, and Elizabeth A. Segal, Editors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume and Issue Number:</td>
<td>Vol. 1 No. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript ID:</td>
<td>11049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page Number:</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year:</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education is a refereed journal concerned with publishing scholarly and relevant articles on continuing education, professional development, and training in the field of social welfare. The aims of the journal are to advance the science of professional development and continuing social work education, to foster understanding among educators, practitioners, and researchers, and to promote discussion that represents a broad spectrum of interests in the field. The opinions expressed in this journal are solely those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the policy positions of The University of Texas at Austin’s School of Social Work or its Center for Social Work Research.

Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education is published three times a year (Spring, Summer, and Winter) by the Center for Social Work Research at 1 University Station, D3500 Austin, TX 78712. Journal subscriptions are $110. Our website at www.profdevjournal.org contains additional information regarding submission of publications and subscriptions.

Copyright © by The University of Texas at Austin’s School of Social Work’s Center for Social Work Research. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

ISSN: 1097-4911

URL: www.profdevjournal.org  
Email: www.profdevjournal.org/contact
Income Security and Public Assistance for Women and Children


Income Security and Public Assistance for Women and Children sounds an alarm for catastrophes in the near future for poor women and children. State and federal legislation and policies of recent origin and implementation, as the editors observe, are about “ending a relationship between government and people in need.”

The AFDC program, the core of the economic safety net for women and children, is being assaulted under the pretense of national progressive action leading to increased self-reliance on the part of the recipients. Caseload reduction through eligibility requirements and time limitations will alter for the worst the survival struggles of four million women and ten million children. This mean-spirited approach further polarizes the nation and contradicts the historical rights implicit in the nature of citizenship in a democracy. The editors sum up the broad dimensions succinctly: “The inequity of this value contradiction becomes clear — at its base to racism, sexism, and classism.”

Within such a context, the social ambivalence as to the poor is creatively and forcefully examined in the book’s five articles, based in a range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies for data gathering and analysis.

The first by Martha N. Ozawa, “Federal Role in Establishing National Income Security for Children,” stresses the necessity for creating an income security program unrelated to welfare. She defines the social challenge as the need “to invest more public resources in the nation’s children of the country is to have a future workforce with the skills necessary to compete in the global economy and to support the impending retirees.” Reasons are provided for the inability of public income transfers to meet this challenge. The author holds that too broad a shift from federal to state-developed programs of income security for children will result in unsuitable variations.

Sandra Sue Butler and Mary Katherine Nevins’s research study, “Welfare Mothers Speak,” the second article in the collection, is intended “to bring recipient voices to the welfare debate.” Artfully combining empirical data with personal testimonies, the authors develop six conceptual themes: “struggling against odds; children are priority; catch-22; give us a chance; division of the oppressed; and thank you for listening.” The study is based on data from the state of Maine. Should the study be replicated in other states, the result could aid significantly in consciousness raising, thus reducing the negative influence of the stereotypes and myths so infused in the welfare debate.

The third article reports on an important research study by Sue J. Steiner, in which she asked two questions: “Is there a relationship between family care giving responsibilities and the length of time a person remains on AFDC?” And, “Can the number of months a person remains on public assistance be predicted by whether or not there is a sick member in the family?” Steiner sought to clarify the reasons for public assistance eligibility and the causes of prolonged dependency. The finding that the continued poor health of the children, or of other family members, contributes significantly to keeping AFDC recipients out of the job market has implications for policy-makers and social work practitioners.

The fourth article, “Poverty and Child Placement,” by Nora S. Gustavsson and Ann E. MacEachron, is focused upon the long existing debate about poverty as a reason for removal of children from their own homes. The child welfare
acts of the current decade reflect outworn public
and legislative perceptions as to the nature of the
best interest of the child. The authors highlight the
discriminating social policy against the poor in
general and the Native Americans in particular.
Important for social work education and social
work practice is the authors’ urging: "Distortions
about poor families... are harmful and can be coun-
tered with empirical data."

"Thoughts on Poverty and Inequity," a brief epi-
logue by Marcia Widmer, is a poignant autobi-
ographical account of her being reduced from an
upper middle-class housewife and mother to a sin-
gle-parent welfare recipient, recalling the array of
social rejections and institutionalized humiliations,
but ending with new directions for her personal and
social achievement.

Within the 100 pages of this small volume, the
editors' introduction and the five carefully focused
articles read like one continuous essay. The essay
sions up the facts and flaws concerning legislative
efforts to provide, or withhold, income security for
poor women and children. As a succinct statement,
the book offers immediate understanding and a bold
challenge simultaneously to lawmakers, human ser-
vice professionals, and the public at large.

Albert E. Wilkerson, DSW, Temple University