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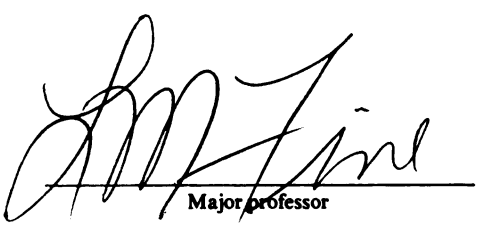
CHOOSING TO CARE:
Meeting Children's Needs
In Detroit and San Diego, 1880 to 1945

presented by

Kyle Emily Ciani

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of the requirements for

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CHOOSING TO CARE:
MEETING CHILDREN'S NEEDS IN DETROIT AND SAN DIEGO, 1880 TO 1945

By

Kyle Emily Ciani

Volume I

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

CHOOSING TO CARE:
MEETING CHILDREN'S NEEDS IN DETROIT AND SAN DIEGO, 1880 TO 1945

By

Kyle Emily Ciani

This dissertation historicizes the availability of quality child care by investigating how two urban areas struggled with the moral, legal, and economic obligations connected to the care and education of children. By using a comparative framework grounded in local case studies, it explores at the community level the ideological underpinnings that have prevented the establishment and implementation of a comprehensive and realistic child care agenda in the United States.

Two broad areas of program development are examined to evaluate these ideas. First, the dissertation studies the ways in which public policies and labor initiatives have either addressed or ignored the specific needs of citizens and employees to target the point at which professional authority listened to its constituents. Secondly, it traces the genealogy of the socially-constructed ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood to understand the limitations inherent in family care programs. Ultimately, this study reveals the historical longevity of child care as a problem specifically linked to women's ability to secure and maintain gainful employment. Only when policymakers *and* parents embrace an understanding of child care's lengthy, complex history will the direction of family leave initiatives change.

Unlike workers in other industrialized countries, wage-earning parents in the United States never had access to adequate and affordable care for their children. When care was offered, it took the form of state assistance rather than a benefit of employment. Child care programs in Detroit and San Diego exemplify how the delivery of organized day care grew out of community-based, philanthropic initiatives that provided health care and welfare to women and their children based on their status as *mothers* rather than as *workers*.

This emphasis forced the delivery of child care to evolve into a social welfare practice instead of an industrial labor policy; a legacy that allowed corporations to mark the issue for charitable rather than operational funding. It has also encouraged the state to avoid developing a long-term, comprehensive child care plan, intervening only in emergency situations. Moreover, it defined day care in terms of mothers' needs and ignored a father's right to care for his children. Thus, involvement by the state has guided policy directives along lines set by child guidance advocates rather than toward the immediate needs of working people. Ultimately, the underlying assumption that good mothers remained in their homes determined and continues to shape the project of providing and using child care.

The ways in which Americans organized their family life, monitored the health and welfare of children, and directed the activities of mothers provides rich material for analyzing the multi-dimensional environment in which child welfare advocates and parents interacted. "Choosing to Care: Meeting Children's Needs in Detroit and San Diego, 1880 to 1945," uses sources that include the voices of program users rather than just program creators, revealing the multiple ways in which parents tried to manage both their parenting and workplace responsibilities. The evidence also shows that ideas about who should be involved in child care have been ingrained in the popular culture for centuries, affecting the direction of current policy.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like the care of children, completing this dissertation depended on the many voices, ideas, actions, and generosity of scholars, friends, and family. Perhaps made cliché by Hilary Rodham Clinton's book, my experience shows that it did take a village to care for my "babies." That village extended across the continent and shifted direction once my "baby" switched from an academic project to the birth and care of our daughter. Along those complicated roads, the Maker has blessed me with a bounty of friendship and guidance of which I am profoundly grateful.

My dissertation committee exemplified the spirit of collegiality and mentorship. Lisa M. Fine supported my scholarship from the first day we met, allowing me the academic freedom to choose projects, timelines, and styles. Her guidance always reflected a confidence in my work that invigorated me when the surrealness of graduate school almost took its toll. Seminars and interactions with Peter Levine always offered thought-provoking environments, inspiring me to explore new directions with the material. Throughout my time at MSU, I witnessed how David Bailey combined the rigors of academic achievement with the commitment to family and friends. His dynamic teaching style cannot be surpassed but it set a goal for my own contact with students. My research became further defined through conversations and coffee with Julia Grant. Always enjoyable, she honored my work with her close readings and helped me strengthen the arguments. Rita Gallin's enthusiasm for my research encouraged me to continue searching for answers and solidify my findings.

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Jeannette M. Hercik, former executive director of the MCCC, and Dawn Hecker, director of FCCR, for their friendship and leadership during my tenures in their employ.

I thank the many archival staff members who searched for documents in their holdings. Particular thanks goes to David Klaasen at the Social Welfare History Archives at the University of Minnesota; Lyn Olson and Bill Payne at San Diego State University Special Collections; Rick Crawford and Sally West at the San Diego Historical Society Research Archives; Dave Johnson and Claude Thompson of the United Way of San Diego; John Gibson and staff in the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library; and the staff at the Walter Reuther Labor Archives at Wayne State University.

I continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity of people who come into my life. They offered me safe and fun spaces in which to complete this project, feeding me in body and spirit. I could not have maneuvered through the hoops without the friendship of fellow graduates Montiel Arredondo, Cathy Badura, Vibha Bhalla, Stacey Bieler, Meg Domroese, Mannelisi Gengi, Maria Quinlan-Leiby, Mary Mapes, Patti Rogers, Susan Stein Roggenbuck, Tammy Stone, and Chuck Urbany. They helped me shape my ideas into arguments but most importantly, we gave one another space to let loose from the pressures of the academic world. The long-time friendships of Iris Engstrand, Jane and John Walstrom, Margo Howard, Barbara Neault Kelber, and Rosalie Meyer remind me daily of my good fortune.

The unconditional love of my parents and siblings gave me the confidence to enter graduate school. Never questioning, they have stored my things, housed me and helped me move many times across the country. Watching the growth of my siblings' families kept me grounded in the reality of my topic. Most importantly, my husband, Doug, always knew which song to sing and joke to tell. He took critical time out of his own graduate program to care for our newborn daughter, edit my work, and build my confidence. His devotion to me, our daughter, and the work we do as a family allowed me to finish this dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

The presence of mothers in the workforce provokes emotional debates in America. Because the care of children has for much of modern history been associated with women's roles and women's work, those who wish to preserve "the family" question the parenting abilities of wage-earning women and render suspect the dispositions of children placed in the care of professional providers. Armed with ideas that situate mothers as a family's only appropriate caregiver, advocates of "traditional" values have turned the waged labor force into a battleground for defending their narrow definition of family as a nuclear, male-headed entity. They view the increase of wage-earning mothers as a recent phenomenon that threatens the security of the post-modern family. Yet, this is not a new trend; indeed, historical evidence shows that mothers have steadily entered the workforce and depended on professional care providers since the late nineteenth century.

"Choosing to Care: Meeting Children's Needs in Detroit and San Diego, 1880 to 1945," historicizes the availability of quality child care by investigating how two urban areas struggled with the moral, legal, and economic obligations connected to the care and education of children. By using a comparative framework grounded in local case studies, it explores at the community level the ideological underpinnings that have prevented the establishment and implementation of a comprehensive and realistic child care agenda in the United States.

To evaluate these ideas, this dissertation examines two broad areas of program development. First, it studies the ways in which public policies and labor initiatives have

either addressed or ignored the specific needs of citizens and employees to target the point at which professional authority listened to its constituents. Secondly, it traces the genealogy of the socially-constructed ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood to understand the limitations inherent in family care programs. Ultimately, this study reveals the historical longevity of child care as a problem specifically linked to women's ability to secure and maintain gainful employment. Only when policy makers *and* parents embrace an understanding of child care's lengthy, complex history will the direction of family leave initiatives change.

In truth, programs for children have generally fallen last in line of public and private budget priorities. Rhetoric from election-year politicians claim their devoted investment in developing programs that support the health and welfare of the nation's youngest citizens; however, today over 14.3 million American children live in poverty and 8 million lack access to health care.[1] One issue that continues to plague the country is the absence of a comprehensive child care agenda that provides quality care for children no matter their economic, racial, and ethnic position.

The implementation of such child care is a chief concern among advocates, yet, their advocacy operates within a constellation of ideological constraints that halts progress toward collaborative efforts. Chief among these barriers are notions about motherhood and fatherhood, specifically the roles society believes mothers and fathers should fill in parenting.[2] Racist, classist, and homophobic beliefs also influence

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[1] Children's Defense Fund, *The State of America's Children 1992* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1992), ix. The June 1, 1996 demonstration in Washington, D.C. by child welfare advocates spawned interesting discussion regarding this issue. Organized by the oft-described outspoken Marian Wright of the Children's Defense Fund, some advocacy groups claimed the march too politicized for their liking. For instance, in the May 31, 1996 "All Things Considered" broadcast, National Public Radio reported that organizations such as Greenpeace and Zero Population planned to attend the march, but that the child-centered non-profit agency Boys and Girls Clubs declined, citing they wished to maintain a non-partisan approach to helping children and adolescents.

[2] The understandings of manhood and womanhood relate directly to assumptions of motherhood and fatherhood. On page 7 in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United State, 1880-1917* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Gail Bederman explains that "gender — whether manhood or womanhood — is a *historical, ideological process*" in which "individuals are positioned and position themselves as men or as women."

American ideas about who should parent.[3] Thus, a review of the ways in which these ideologies shaped the provision of child care for wage-earning parents in the United States appears throughout the dissertation.

Part of that review includes understanding the ongoing debate by social historians regarding the motivations of reformers; that is, did reformers hope to alleviate the condition of the underclass or work to control these groups? In the 1970s, David Rothman and Michael Katz began revising the idea that white, middle-class reformers hoped to save the underclasses.[4] This revisionist interpretation has since been challenged by historians who integrate understandings of gender, race, and ethnicity into their analysis of class, shedding new light on the complexity of reformers.

In analyzing the diversity of the labor force in America, David R. Roediger points out that the terms white and worker became "meaningfully paired" in the nineteenth century when wage earning became a powerful symbol of independence. He explains that in a slave holding republic, the "bondage of Blacks served as a touchstone by which dependence and degradation were measured. Racial formation and class formation were thus bound to penetrate each other at every turn."[5] Consequently, white reformers were not dealing with a purely white working-class population; however, their agendas emphasized aid to only these workers. In the late nineteenth century, African American, Mexican American, and Jewish advocates entered the world of reform, devoting their

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[3] Elizabeth Fox-Piven in Linda Gordon, ed. Women, *the State, and Welfare* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) analyzes the ways race has defined the options available to women requesting government assistance. Emily D. Cahan in *Past Caring: A History of U.S. Preschool Care and Education for the Poor, 1820-1965* (New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, School of Public Health, Columbia University, 1989) deals with the ways in which class has forced many parents into accepting inadequate and even dangerous day care situations for their children. Research on gay and lesbian parenting is limited, and according to Katherine R. Allen and David H. Demo, these parents have been "problematized and their diversity has been overlooked." See Allen and Demo, "The Families of Lesbians and Gay Men: A New Frontier in Family Research," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57 (February 1995): 111-127.

[4] David Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971) and Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

[5] David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 20.

attention to "socially uplifting" and protecting workers from their own racial and ethnic groups.[6]

Feminist historians have also diversified previously homogenized interpretations that pitted a male, Anglo working class against an unified, Anglo middle class. Their scholarship reveals far more complex forms of internal control within class groups as well as an heightened agency among those groups deemed victims by previous scholars. Peggy Pascoe explains this process in her work on white female reformers in the American West regarding their interactions with American Indian, Chinese, and Mormon women and girls. She argues that:

> We have to probe the interaction between class-based systems of social control and gender systems, the ways societies create, maintain, and reproduce ideas about gender. But even this is not enough; we then have to explain how both systems bear on overlapping racial and cultural hierarchies.[7]

In this vein, Mary Odem found in her study of California's response to delinquency and adolescent girls during the Progressive Era, that sectors of the working

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[6] On African American reformers see Elizabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); on Mexican American efforts, see Dennis Nodin Valdés, *El Pueblo Mexicano en Detroit y Michigan: A Social History* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1982); and for Jewish aid, refer to Sidney Bolkosky, *Harmony and Dissonance: Voice of Jewish Identity in Detroit, 1914-1967* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991).

[7] Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), xx. My thinking about the ways in which social control in nineteenth and twentieth century America operated in a fluid, multi-dimensional rather than static environment has been most informed by the work of Karen Anderson, Antonia Casteñeda, Linda Gordon, Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham, Dolores E. Janiewski, Regina G. Kunzel, Robyn Muncy, Mary E. Odem, Peggy Pascoe, Sandra Schackel, and Rickie Solinger. See Anderson, *Changing Woman: A History of Racial Ethnic Women in Modern America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Casteñeda, "Women of Color and the Rewriting of Western History: The Discourse, Politics and Decolonization of History," *Pacific Historical Review* 61, no. 4 (1992): 501-533; Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston 1880-1960* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988); Higgenbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale Univesity Press, 1993); Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*; Schackel, *Social Housekeepers: Women Shaping Public Policy in New Mexico, 1920-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexcio Press, 1992); and Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

class often used middle-class notions about family, work, and citizenship to contain women and men within their prescribed gender roles.[8]

An historical review of child care arrangements reveals this angst among and between classes in the United States. But an analysis of class is not enough, because child care options were defined by a worker's age, gender, marital status, race, ethnicity, and religion. While most feminist scholars bemoan the fact that working mothers have not had access to adequate day care, similar arguments can be made for single fathers who have full responsibility for the care of their children. To be sure, married working fathers face few child care problems because their wives handle either the daily care of their children or the making of arrangements for a child care provider in 94 percent of U.S. homes.[9] Yet single fathers never had the benefits — and regulations — of federally-sponsored aid that single mothers experienced. Programs such as Mothers' Pensions and Aid to Dependent Children have all been directed at single mothers specifically because, as mothers, society understands them as dependent and in need of assistance.

Unlike workers in other industrialized countries, wage-earning parents in the United States never had access to adequate and affordable care for their children. When care was offered, it took the form of state assistance rather than a benefit of employment. Child care programs in Detroit and San Diego exemplify how the delivery of organized day care grew out of community-based, philanthropic initiatives that provided health care and welfare to women and their children based on their status as *mothers* rather than as *workers*.

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[8] Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*, especially Chapter 6, " 'This Terrible Freedom': Generational Conflicts in Working-Class Families," 157-184. For an interesting account of class relationships in a highly industrialized city, see Ellen Ross, " 'Fierce Questions and Taunts': Married Life in Working-Class London, 1870-1914," *Feminist Studies* (Fall 1982): 575-602.

[9] David J. Maume and Karen R. Mullin, "Men's Participation in Child Care and Women's Work Attachment," *Social Problems* 40, no. 4 (November 1993): 533-546. This statistic is taken from the 1972 National Longitudinal Survey, however, on page 535 Maume and Mullin argue that, "recent data show that men still do not participate in child care and their level of participation does not vary with their wives' employment status."

This emphasis forced the delivery of child care to evolve into a social welfare practice instead of an industrial labor policy; a legacy that allowed corporations to mark the issue for charitable rather than operational funding. It has also encouraged the state to avoid developing a long-term, comprehensive child care plan, intervening only in emergency situations. Moreover, it defined day care in terms of mothers' needs and ignored a father's right to care for his children. Thus, involvement by the state has guided policy directives along lines set by child guidance advocates rather than toward the immediate needs of working people. Ultimately, the underlying assumption that good mothers remained in their homes determined and continues to shape the project of providing and using child care.

The ways in which Americans organized their family life, monitored the health and welfare of children, and directed the activities of mothers provides rich material for analyzing the multi-dimensional environment in which child welfare advocates and parents interacted. In turn, these relations influenced the directions that public/private child care initiatives could take when civic leaders began to formulate policy. The road to these actions is more cyclical than Americans rich in innovative ideas may like to imagine. Journalist Geraldine Youcha discovered in her historical investigation of child care that, in essence, Americans "live with modern counterparts of old systems."[10] Work arrangements such as indenture and apprenticeship, social welfare solutions like foster home placement, and educational experimentation with play-groups in community centers have all been considered forms of child care at one time in America's history.

Interestingly, parents and not their children have been categorized as recipients of these innovations since the economic, sociolegal, political, and psychological positions of a parent have always defined the kind of non-familial support available to a family.[11]

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[10] Geraldine Youcha, *Minding the Children: Child Care in America From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 13.

[11] Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of *Dependency*: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State," *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 309-336. On page 312, Fraser and Gordon explain that an economic register occurs when "one depends on some other person(s) or institution for subsistence;" a sociolegal register is recognized as a "status" with "the lack of a separate legal or public identity, as in the

Philosopher Nancy Fraser and historian Linda Gordon have argued that "signifiers" such as race and ethnicity have influenced how a citizen can interact with the state.[12] Since the colonial period, these signifiers have intersected with the economic realities of families' lives to guide the ways in which parents can negotiate for care choices. The research in this dissertation tracks how people have understood the need for child care and then set about meeting that need.

An analysis of these needs sheds light on a number of historical themes: employer/employee relations, public policy formation, social welfare structures, directions in educational standards, urban development, and the historical constructions of the family. "Choosing to Care" incorporates these themes, and adds to the historical literature on the subject of child care in four areas. First, it uses child care as a point at which mothers from a variety of ethnic, racial and class positions commonly interacted with employers, civic leaders and reformers. Beginning in 1880, work opportunities in Detroit and San Diego began attracting diverse groups of residents, with women representing many of these new workers; however, few studies detail the ways in which these women could and did organize their lives.[13] Analyzing the use of child care reveals how reformers (volunteer and

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status of married women created by coverture"; a political register appears when "subjection to an external ruling power" exists and it "may be predicated of a colony or of a subject caste of noncitizen residents;" and the moral/psychological register is defined by "an individual character trait like lack of will power or excessive emotional neediness."

[12] Ibid.

[13] Scholarship that focuses on the lives of midwest urban women workers prior to World War II mobilization has expanded in the last fifteen years, but Detroit remains a little examined city. An important exception is Patricia Cooper, *Once a Cigarmaker: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories 1900-1919* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987). For work on other midwestern cities see Elizabeth Faue,*Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); and Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

Most California history labor scholars have ignored the presence of women workers in urban settings. For example, David F. Selvin makes no mention of women workers in California or of any wage earning in San Diego by females in his *A Place in the Sun: A History of California Labor* (San Francisco: Boyd and Fraser Publishing Co., 1981). Historians who focus on the formation of ethnic identities in California have started to fill this void in the secondary literature, however, except for one study (Mary Lou Locke's), their work has centered on women living and working in northern California communities. See Mary Lou Locke, "Out of the Shadows and Into the Western Sun: Working Women of the Late Nineteenth-Century Urban Far West," *Journal of Urban History* 16, no. 2 (February 1990): 175-204. The best examples of scholarship on women wage earners in northern California are Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery*

professional), educators, and the workers themselves used segregation and prejudice to qualify parental needs. In placing the lives of Mexican American, American Indian, Asian, African American, and Anglo parent workers at the center of the study, the dissertation contributes new findings on multicultural interactions in the Midwest and Southwest from 1880 - 1945.

Detroit and San Diego represent "border" areas, yet the comparisons of these communities proved fruitful beyond political boundaries. First, both cities enjoyed long histories of private child care initiatives and hosted federally-sponsored child care projects during the Great Depression and World War II. Secondly, intellectual advances, such as the Kindergarten Movement, influenced child care advocates in each city to experiment with new ways of caring for children. Thirdly, in 1880 when the analysis in this dissertation begins, neither Detroit nor San Diego were major urban areas; however, both cities would develop by the Great Depression into important destinations for wage earners. Each city represents an area that attracted migrants from rural America and immigrants from around the world, all of whom worked in factories, canneries, and a variety of service sector jobs.

The multicultural communities of Detroit and San Diego provide a context to interrogate what Chicana historian Antonia Castañeda described as the "historical gender, 'racial,' political, economic, and cultural issues and conflicts inherent in interracial marriage, assimilation, and acculturation."[14] Other historical studies approach child care from the perspective of state intervention and control, but the research in this dissertation focuses on the interactions among local advocates, workers, and employers as each acted to improve their various positions in the community. Analyzing the locales of Detroit and San Diego reveals how multi-dimensional relationships develop between and in spite

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Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Inudstry, 1930-1950 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); and Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in SanFrancisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[14] Castañeda, "Women of Color and the Rewriting of Western History," 512.

of borders; specifically, how migrant and immigrant movements influenced change in the lives of workers, be they from the working or middle classes.

"Border" is a contested term, especially when applied to the southwestern region of the United States, because of the often fluid migrations of people across politically-defined boundaries. According to historian Oscar J. Martínez, border communities in the southwest experienced political turmoil long before the Anglo conquest of Mexico in 1846.[15] But most historians of the American West have approached their interpretations of this area from an Euro-American (or Anglo) perspective. As Castañeda explains in her provocative historiography, approaching the history of the American West from an Euro-American perspective continues to place the reactions of Anglos to "the other" at center stage.[16] In order to understand the changing nature of child care in Detroit and San Diego, one must not just recognize but start with an analysis of the "inherent issues and conflicts" that have been generated and magnified by intercultural and multicultural communities, many of which were brought to these areas by diverse groups of migrant and immigrant peoples.[17]

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[15] Oscar J. Martínez, *Troublesome Border* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988).

[16] In fact, much of the research on "women" in the American West has taken this Euro-American perspective by focusing on how Anglo reformers influenced the lives of their clients. The authors contributing to the special issue of the *Pacific Historical Review* on women and gender in November 1992 (vol. 61, no. 4) emphasized the critical need for an integration of gender into inter-cultural analysis. Using the pivotal essay "The Gentle Tamers' Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West" published in *PHR* in 1980 by Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, the authors similarly argued that while Jensen and Miller called for a "substantial expansion of the topic of 'western women and politics', [t]hey nevertheless retained a traditional view of politics itself, using the word to refer generally to the formal operations of public institutions, and the public activities of particularly powerful individuals." (Quoted on pp. 535-36 of "Else Surely We Shall All Hang Separately: The Politics of Western Women's History," by Virginia Scharff). Authors included in that issue (and cited throughout this Introduction) include Casteñada, "Women of Color and the Rewriting of Western History;"Karen Anderson, "Work, Gender, and Power in the West," 481-499; and Virginia Scharff (cited above).

Work that uses the history of women of color as the centerpiece includes Anderson, *Changing Women;* Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives;* Yung, and *Unbound Feet.* See also Mario Garcia, "The Chicana in American History: The Mexican Women of El Paso, 1880-1920—A Case Study," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (1980): 315-37; Ruiz's "By the Day or Week: Mexicana Domestic Workers in El Paso," in *'To Toil the Livelong Day'" America's Women at Work, 1780-1980,* Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, eds. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 269-83; George J. Sanchez, " 'Go After the Women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Women,1915-1929," in *Unequal Sisters,* Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz, eds., (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 250-63; Schackel, *Social Housekeepers*; and Robert A. Trennart, "Educating Indian Girls at Non-reservation Boarding Schools, 1878-1920," *Unequal Sisters,* 224-237.

[17] On pages 15-16 in *Changing Woman,* Karen Anderson emphasizes that women of color have

A second consideration of this dissertation evaluates the success of public/private collaborations. The comparative framework at the local level allows me to test how private initiatives fared in communities that became hosts to federally-sponsored child care projects during the Great Depression and World War II.[18] Scholars analyzing national agendas have unwittingly ignored the long history of private child care initiatives operating in Detroit and San Diego. Too often, contemporary policy makers point to federal programs as the only examples of successful day care. Consequently they overlook an entire realm of possible collaboration with the private sector. By using communities that experienced success and failure in both public and private programs we can more fully assess the need for and effectiveness of child care operations.

Thirdly, this study approaches child care from a labor policy perspective rather than as an issue of social welfare. Labor and industrial relations scholars and political scientists have included brief surveys of the history of child care in their research, but because their work focuses on the contemporary debate over employer involvement in work/family supports, they overlook useful historical trends, such as how economic shifts influenced legislative maneuvering.[19] Most contemporary child care advocates point to the 1970s as the time when mothers entered the workplace and needed help with day care. Reliance on statistics from 1970 to the present, however, obscures the makeup of

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been marginalized within those borders precisely because of their racial ethnic heritage, and that the pressure for them to conform to an Anglo structure has been a constant in their lives.

[18] In "Comparing American History," *Reviews in American History* 10, no. 3 (December 1982): 64-81, Peter Kolchin details three "broadly overlapping purposes or functions of comparative history," with the first and most basic being the creation of an "awareness of alternatives" . . . which can lead "to the posing of new questions" (p. 64). Secondly, comparative history can serve as a "primitive form of historical 'experimentation,' permitting the investigation to test the relative impact of various social, economic, demographic, political, or intellectual factors" (p. 65). Thirdly, Kolchin posits that historians can "recognize common patterns and make historical generalizations" through the use of a comparative model (p. 65).

[19] See Sheila Kamerman and Alfred J. Kahn, *Mothers Alone: Strategies for a Time of Change* (Dover: Auburn House Publishing Co., 1988); Kamerman, Kahn, and Paul Kingston, *Maternity Policies and Working Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Abbie Gordon Klein, *The Debate Over Child Care, 1969-1990* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Gwen Morgan, "Child Daycare Policy in Chaos" and Catherine J. Ross, "Advocacy Movements in the Century of the Child," in *Children, Families and Government: Perspectives on American Social Policy*, Edward F. Zigler, Sharon Lynn Kagan and Edgar Keugman, eds. (Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

the current workforce because it focuses on the influx of white, middle-class women who are more able to afford quality child care programs and possess the bargaining power needed to create or change initiatives. The myth that mothers only recently entered the job market is eliminated when analysts investigate labor trends beginning in the 1880s.[20]

Finally, "Choosing to Care" explores the ideology that understands child care as a wholly female project and the implications this notion has had for mothers *and* fathers. As political scientist Susan E. Riley points out for the post- World War II era, society was unwilling to support policy that went against established roles for men and women, therefore any implementation of public child care would suggest the sanctioning of a change in who cared for children and how that caring occurred. According to Riley, "public officials clearly wished to avoid contributing to sex role changes."[21] American society has often ignored or under-rated the work of fathers due to assumptions made in regards to child caring roles; indeed, very little historical scholarship exists on the roles of fathers. Sociologists Ralph LaRossa and Donald C. Reitzes' have analyzed fathers' efforts to learn more about parenting in the 1920s as a first attempt to understand this issue.[22] LaRossa extends that research in *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History,* but little else exists on the historical place of fathers in America.[23] The sources for Detroit and San Diego point toward an analysis of the ways that fathers attempted to and were allowed to engage in child care. However, the evidence that specifies child care as mothers' work (and consequently mothers' dilemmas) remains primary to the analysis.

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[20] For instance, David Maume and Karen Mullin use the work of a sociologist to understand the historical context of father participation in child care. Their source, Arlie Hochschild, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Viking Press, 1989) delineates three stages of work and family in America: the colonial period, the industrial revolution, and the mid-twentieth century when "women began to return to work." See Maume and Mullin, "Men's Particpation in Child Care and Women's Work Attachment," 534.

[21] Susan E. Riley, "Caring for Rosie's Children: Federal Child Care Policies in the World War II Era," *Polity* 26, no. 4 (Summer 1994): 655-675 (Quoted on 673).

[22] Ralph LaRossa and Donald C. Reitzes, "Gendered Perceptions of Father Involvement in Early 20th Century America," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57 (February 1995): 223-229.

[23] Ralph La Rossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

As this dissertation reveals, ideas about who should be involved in child care have been ingrained in the popular culture for centuries, affecting the direction of current policy. By using sources that include the voices of program users rather than just program creators, the ways in which parents tried to manage both their parenting and workplace responsibilities is evident.

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Historians have not ignored child care; on the contrary, as a pet project of many women's clubs and settlement houses, they have used the subject of child care to understand Progressive reform.[24] In fact, some of the most complex monographs regarding social welfare address the interaction between reformers and mothers. Whereas earlier studies simply glorified or chastised decisions made by settlement house workers, recent work uses the numerous reports, charts, letters, and manuscripts generated by these workers to suggest that entrenched cultural ideologies and professional self interest often directed reform agendas.[25] Yet as Elizabeth Rose notes in her study of day care in Philadelphia, while much of this work recognizes the "interconnection between the roles of mother and worker," historians continue to use sources (such as reformers' documentation) in ways that define a woman's "identity" in

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[24] The classic work on the Settlement House Movement is Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). See also Judith Ann Trolanger, *Settlement Houses and the Great Depression* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975). Most research prior to 1985 glorified the achievements of these reformers; however, historians have started taking a more critical look at the efforts of white, middle-class reformers as well as to begin analyzing the work of African American reformers. See Mina Carson, *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990); Ruth Hutchinson Crocker, *Social Work and Social Order: The Settlement Movement in Two Industrial Cities, 1889-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White: Racial Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989); Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors;* and Elizabeth Rose, "From Sponge Cake to *Hamentashen*: Jewish Identity in a Jewish Settlement House, 1885-1952 *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 3-23.

[25] Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935 ;* and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

distinctive rather than inclusive terms; that is, she is analyzed as a worker or as a parent but not as a wage-earning mother.[26]

Eileen Boris' analysis of industrial homework is an important exception that highlights the ways in which policy makers "often forgot that homeworkers were working mothers who needed social support and sought empowerment."[27] The mothers in Boris' research often labored at homework because little or no child care services existed for them. But how did mothers who left their homes to earn wages manage the double burden of paid and non-paid labor? The analysis of state, charitable, and business responses to mothers' child care needs raises queries of how wage-earning women reacted to reformers' solutions. Did mothers give up their right to monitor, and thereby to direct the values their children learned while in the care of a nonfamilial provider? Moreover, how have the ideological underpinnings of race, class, gender, and ethnicity determined the availability of quality child care?

Historians of European women and their labor have asked these kinds of questions and found that mothers did not remain passive victims of some state- and employer-controlled world.[28] On the contrary, Judy Lown found that English women working in Essex silk mills refused to use the day nursery provided by employers because they viewed the "benefit" as an intrusion into their private lives. Consequently, the facility closed within only three years.[29] In her analysis of survival strategies used by working-class families in London, Ellen Ross demonstrated that mother's labor rather than a nebulous "family" effort fed husbands and children. According to Ross, "to mother was to work for and organize household subsistence."[30]

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[26] Elizabeth R. Rose, "Maternal Work: Day Care in Philadelphia, 1890-1960," (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1994), 4-5.

[27] Eileen Boris, *Home to Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Homework in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17.

[28] For an overview of this scholarship, see Sonya O. Rose, " 'Gender at Work': Sex, Class and Industrial Capitalism," *History Workshop* 21 (Spring 1986): 113-131.

[29] Judy Lown, "Not So Much a Factory, More a Form of Patriarchy: Gender and Class During Industrialisation," in E. Garmarnikow et al, eds. *Gender, Class and Work* (London: Heineman Press, 1983).

[30] Ellen Ross, *Love & Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (New York and Oxford:

A different situation arose in the United States: club women, settlement house staff, and social workers viewed the working mother through the lens of their middle-class status, causing them to see wage earning by mothers as an anomaly which needed fixing. If that mother was single, she presented an even greater threat to society. In *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare*, Linda Gordon shows us the power behind images establishing single mothers as deviant menaces whose sexual behavior needed to be controlled.[31] Reformers embraced these images, demanding that children be protected from what they understood as wayward women ill-equipped to raise children.[32] In analyzing the interactions between female social workers and clients, Gordon shows the critical connections between long-held beliefs regarding gender, race, class and ethnicity to the formation of social policy. For instance, white reformers embraced ideas that rationalized the poverty of African Americans, believing they "needed less to live on than whites." This myth played out dramatically in a New Deal program, Aid to Dependent Children, which "systematically deprived" African Americans access to ADC benefits. In 1937-40, Gordon reports, only 14-17 percent of recipients were Black.[33]

Consequently, the programs that independent, college-educated women conceptualized, supported, and implemented used the nuclear family as the superior model for raising good citizens. These entrenched ideologies work collectively to construct an often disparaging understanding of working peoples' lives. Immigrants from eastern and southern Europe brought their cultural icons along with their poverty to

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Oxford University Press, 1993), 9.

[31] Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

[32] One of Gordon's projects in *Pitied But Not Entitled* is to trace the historical longevity of single mothers in America to correct the misperception that single motherhood was a phenomenon that began only in the 1960s. In an earlier work, *Heroes of Their Own Lives*, Gordon explains the importance of tracking the history of social ideas. She notes that "family violence had had virtually no history; that most who discussed it — experts, journalists, friends — assumed they were discussing a new problem. . . I began to notice the distortions created in the public discussion by the lack of a history." See *Heroes of Their Own Lives*, 2.

[33] Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, 276.

America. Desperate for work, migrants from rural America entered an unfamiliar urban world and appeared odd (even deviant) to many reformers. It is the history of how these groups interacted with one another, Gordon argues, in which we need to be grounded.

The flurry of recent literature on working mothers in the United States emphasizes the long history of social welfare policy by examining how and when the state has intervened to assist mothers with caring for their children. As noted by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel in their edited work, *Mothers of a New World*, this literature articulates the ways in which "female reformers, individually and through organizations, exerted a powerful influence in defining the needs of mothers and children and designing institutions and programs to address them."[34] For instance, sociologist Theda Skocpol demonstrated in her extensive study of social policy in the United States that, "American women developed the largest and most assertive 'woman movements' in the world" which "set the stage for the maternalist social policy breakthroughs of the Progressive Era."[35] Yet, mothers' lives remain peripheral to the analysis as these scholars dedicate themselves to interrogating the rather fluid meanings of "maternalism" — that is, the transformation of "motherhood from women's primary *private* responsibility into *public* policy" — to understand reformers' motivations and actions.[36] Looking at who used organized child care programs and why they needed this assistance provides a framework in which to examine what Karen Anderson has defined as the "sexual-emotional dimensions of gender and race relations."[37]

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[34] Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Introduction: "Mother Worlds," in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, Koven and Michel, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.

[35] Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 321.

[36] Koven and Michel, *Mothers of a New World*, 2. For work which thoroughly discusses the concept of maternalism see the essays in Koven and Michel, *Mothers of a New World*; Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917-1942* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); and Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, particuarly Part II.

[37] Anderson, "Work, Gender, and Power in the American West," 487.

In the 1980s, historians discovered child care as an important topic of analysis in its own right. Indeed, when Margaret O'Brien Steinfels stated, "The history of child care is yet to be written," she readily admitted that her work, Who's *Minding the Children*, had not exhausted the resources.[38] Beginning with studies of national agendas, Karen Anderson and Sonya Michel enhanced the literature by analyzing how state actions affected the levels at which wage-earning women could participate as patriotic citizens during World War II and beyond.[39] Using the day nursery as a focal point, Anne Durst analyzed the published work of a variety of Progressive Era child care advocates to explain why the day nursery fell into disrepute by the 1920s.[40] Michel also traced the intellectual movements which influenced the evolution of organized child care to understand how the influx of professionally-trained advocacy changed the nature of child care in the United States; and her forthcoming book, *Children's Interests/Mother's Rights* will be the first full-length historical study of day care policy in America.[41]

While these studies are indeed important, their sources force them to dedicate their analysis to examining the actions of policy makers in lieu of the very important story of the wage-earning mother. Historians like Elizabeth R. Rose and Regina G. Kunzel have started framing their work around mothers' worlds rather than reformers' agendas. Rose turned to Philadelphia — a city teaming with working mothers and day nurseries by the turn of the century — and listened to the voices of mothers to find that changing ideas about mothers' work and the public's response to that work influenced the kind of available day care.[42] Kunzel's analysis of documentation regarding pregnant,

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[38] Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, *Who's Minding the Children: The History and Politics of Day Care in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

[39] Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); and Sonya Michel, "American Women and the Discourse of the Democratic Family," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz, eds. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 154-167.

[40] Anne Durst, "Day Nurseries and Wage-Earning Mothers in the United States, 1890-1930," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989).

[41] Sonya Michel, *Children's Interests/Mothers Rights: The Shaping of America's Child Care Policy* (forthcoming, Yale University Press).

[42] Rose, "Matetnal Work;" and *A Mother's Job: The History of Day Care, 1890-1960* (Oxford:

unmarried adolescents suggests the acute awareness by these young mothers of their images as sexualized renegades, tarnished if racially white, tarnishing if racially black. Reformers saw both groups as outcasts in society.[43]

To reclaim the perspectives of these mothers, Rose and Kunzel used the case reports of social workers, an admittedly tainted source on which to rely. Nevertheless, it remains the closest way to return the voice to voiceless individuals.[44] Recorded by professionals, case records provide a clear representation of how they understood their clients' needs and how those clients expressed their needs to the professionals working with them. As Kunzel explains for the situation of unmarried young mothers, the "telling" of their descent into illegitimacy became a point at which unmarried mothers "proclaimed a right to construct their own identities rather than assume those constructed for them."[45]

Case records are used throughout this dissertation to interpret decisions made by parents in their attempts to secure child care. Reports from settlement houses and relief agencies in each city define the ways in which advocacy changed to conform to changing standards of parenting. Records from women's club organizations, social work associations, and city planners suggest how civic leaders determined program development. They also suggest ways in which employees and employers interacted at the workplace.

Early childhood education was another important development in the caring of children as professionals founded preschool laboratories (popularly known as nursery schools) on college campuses and other academic settings. By the 1920s, educators began extending their expertise to parents who sent their children to nursery schools, and their curriculums became the model for federally-sponsored programs established during

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Oxford University Press, *forthcoming*).

[43] Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls.*

[44] Linda Gordon in *Heroes of Their Own Lives* was the first historian to use papers informed by social work theories to understand "voiceless" women.

[45] Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* 114.

the Great Depression and World War II. Scholars have turned to this history as a site for understanding the position of the family; specifically to interrogate the development of what historian Barbara Beatty has called the "culture of young children" in America.[46] By integrating the changes made in public policy, child welfare, and social reform, their analyses connect this "culture" to national ideas regarding eugenics, immigration, and deviancy. Starting in 1920, Detroit housed one of the most influential early childhood development centers in the country, the Merrill-Palmer School for Motherhood and Home Training. Merrill-Palmer experts focused on training the middle-class family, but they also recognized the needs of the working class and embraced projects that helped improve the health and welfare of these children. San Diegans, on the other hand, protected the influence of professional educators into the 1930s and contained their expertise within middle-class and elite families. As an important development in the history of child care, analyzing the effects that early childhood education created in each city is one of the central comparative factors in the dissertation.

"Choosing to Care" is divided into two parts: chapters one through three provide an overview of child care in America, Detroit, and San Diego; chapters four, five and six explore issues specific to the local communities, namely, tensions between benevolent workers and professionals, judgments regarding appropriate parenting models, and influences by early childhood educators. To set the stage for what would develop after the 1880s, the American overview begins with the colonial period, a time in which most of the ideological constructs referred to throughout this study took hold. For Detroit and

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[46] See Barbara Beatty, *Preschool Education in America: The Culture of Young Children from the Colonial Era to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Hamilton Cravens, *Before Head Start: The Iowa Station and America's Children* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Mary Julia Grant "Modernizing Motherhood: Child Study Clubs and the Parent Education Movement, 1915-1940," (Ph.D. diss. Boston University Graduate School, 1992), and "Caught between Common Sense and Science: The Cornell Study Clubs, 1925-45," *History of Education Quarterly* 34 (Winter 1994): 433-452; Margot Horn, *Before It's Too Late: The Child Guidance Movement in the United States, 1922-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Steven L. Schlossman, "Before Home Start: Notes toward a History of Parent Education in America, 1897-1929," *Harvard Educational Review* 46, no. 3 (August 1976): 436-467; and Julia Wrigley, "Do Young Children Need Intellectual Stimulation? Experts' Advice to Parents, 1900-1985," *History of Education Quarterly* 29 (Spring 1989): 41-75.

San Diego, I start the analysis in the 1880s when day nurseries first appeared in these cities and trace three movements: one, how parents used these facilities to keep their families intact; two, how advocates used them to extend white, middle-class ideals; and three, how employers used them to maintain a ready albeit underpaid workforce. The study ends at 1945 when both cities began to regroup after dramatic population surges as a result of World War II military recruitment and manufacturing. The analysis of choices available to residents in these cities comes from my review of case records from day nurseries, settlement houses and charitable organizations; correspondence between various professionals at the local, state, and federal levels; and oral histories of workers and child care professionals.

The dissertation concludes with some thoughts on the directions that society has taken which detracts from the main project of developing a range of *quality* child care for urban workers. By looking at child care from the perspectives of employees and their contact with employers, I believe we can better understand the current status of the United States parent-worker as well as educate others to the simultaneous positions of women as wage-earners, mothers, and advocates.[47] Ultimately, an evaluation of these earlier efforts allows for an historical explanation to the contemporary dilemmas wage-earning parents face when securing care.

But first, I turn to the genealogy of the term "care" to provide a foundation for understanding how child care has taken on such gendered, racialized, and class-specific meanings in the United States. To place the shifts that occurred at the local level within a national context, the evidence used in Chapter 1 focuses on the "models" for historical urban analysis, namely New York, Chicago, Boston, and Los Angeles.

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[47] John Demos makes this point throughout the essays in *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and the Life Course in American History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Chapter 1

A "CALCULATED" ASSISTANCE: DEFINING THE MEANINGS OF CHILD CARE

"Beyond all philanthropies those calculated to assist children appeal most strongly to humanity."[1]

— Women's Home Association of San Diego, 1901

Due to the woman-centered nature of child care, mothers have carried the ultimate responsibility and burden for ensuring care at all times for their children with little federal or state assistance.[2] When women began earning wages outside of their homes and enlisted assistance with the care of their children, society called into question their loyalty to family and nation. This chapter surveys the ways in which wage-earning parents in America cared for their children from the colonial period through World War II. Their arrangements often included assistance from extended family, neighborhood friends, and reformers involved in child-help organizations. But many parents independently struggled to take proper care of their children. It is these parents who most influenced the direction of child care programming, for since the colonial period, Americans understood child care as a sign of parental inadequacy, or more specifically, as a symbol of dependency.

From 1880 to 1945, the day nursery — in both private and public settings — and parent education programs, such as nursery schools, evolved as the primary child care

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[1] Women's Home Association pamphlet, December 1901, Info Box 65, folder 34, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives, Casa de Prado in Balboa Park, San Diego, California [hereafter SDHS].

[2] Implementation of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 provided the first comprehensive program in the United States to assist wage-earners with family responsibilities. The Act requires all companies with more than fifty employees to provide up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave for an employee experiencing the birth of a child, adoption or the serious illness of a relative.

solutions in the United States. Organizers of day nurseries devoted their energies to saving children from situations they found detrimental to the sound formation of healthy citizens. They used the race, class, ethnicity and gender of a parent to guide their judgments, a practice with highly discriminating consequences for many families. I analyze these situations as relationships between children, their parents, and the forces of waged labor to offer a sense of the changing need for child care, as well as to understand advocate responses to both working- and middle-class families.

The following section details the American understanding of the term "dependency" in order to put parental and advocate decisions in context. The remainder of the chapter lays out an historical overview of the development of day nurseries as well as the influence of parent education on day care. A key point revealed through the evidence is the place devoted to the children needing care. Although direct recipients of organized care, children take on a peripheral and even abstract role during policy formation and program evaluation. Programs which seemingly supported children, typically include components beneficial to adults. For instance, the passage of child labor laws helped secure jobs and increase pay scales for white males while diminishing the capacity of women and children to contribute to the family economy.[3] Even the socialist vision of Robert Owens, which recognized children as independent individuals worthy of inspirational rather than stifling environments, fell to placing children's interests behind those of adults. Owenites urged the creation of communal nurseries in order to make women more productive in society, and not simply as a stimulating way to raise children.[4] Children also bear the burden of

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[3] Child labor is placed in the context of social reform, worker benefits, and political manueaverings in Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*. See also the following essays in *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era*, Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye, eds. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991): Ardis Cameron, "Landscapes of Subterfuge: Working-Class Neighborhoods and Immigrant Women," 56-72; Eileen Boris, "Reconstructing the "Family": Women, Progressive Reform, and the Problem of Social Control," 73-86; Alice Kessler-Harris, "Law and a Living: The Gendered Content of "Free Labor," 87-109; and Molly Ladd-Taylor, "Hull House Goes to Washington: Women and the Children's Bureau," 110-126.

[4] Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 51-53.

society's assessment of their parents as the acceptance of inadequate and unqualified care punishes low-income children for the "sins" of their parents.

Understanding "Dependency": Children, Waged-Labor, and Mothers

While much of the world has for centuries lived under four registers or types of human dependency, — economic, sociolegal, political, and moral/psychological dependency — the arrival of the Industrial Revolution changed the relational foundations in which individuals defined dependence and independence.[5] These changes dramatically affected the position of children.[6]

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, most citizens remained dependent upon a minority of wealthy land owners for their ability to secure custodial needs. But the promise of wages allowed male workers the hope of increased independence, mobility, and security. According to Fraser and Gordon, the Industrial Revolution also brought these same workers unprecedented levels of respectability from their peers and employers. Married men now worked to support an entire family, for a wage-earning wife signaled his inadequacy as a provider.

Most women who earned wages were young, unmarried, and childless. Only mothers desparate for income worked outside the home, usually widows or omen whose husbands had deserted them. For these women, child care proved an immediate concern so they looiked for work arrangements that allowed them the ability to both earn wages and care for their children. In "home work" or "putting out" situations, workers turned their homes into sites of production as they fashioned materials such as cloth and leather into textiles and shoes. As historians Eileen Boris and Cynthia R. Daniels explain:

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[5] Fraser and Gordon, "A Geneology of *Dependency*," 312-319.

[6] Children represent the most dependent of individuals for two important reasons: they are excluded from participating in all "registers" of relational status that define a citizen's level of independence; and their primary care and socialization is provided by women whom society always define as dependent no matter their relational status.

> In the United States, industrial homework developed along with the factory system. In the eighteenth century, merchant manufacturers put out work to farm families and artisanal households, but the homework system that grew in the 1830s and 1840s increasingly derived from industrial capital and relied upon households becoming proletarianized or dependent on wage labor.[7]

Thus, homework allowed parents to earn wages, care for their children, and retain the family's respectability.

Other wage-earning options for mothers included their entry into either a factory or private home as a low-paid operative or domestic; some even fell to prostitution or other sexual service work. In any case, these women often found themselves leaving their life-long neighborhoods and migrating to the ever-expanding urban areas. Torn from familiar settings that included the presence of female kin to help them with child care duties, mothers earning wages often had to leave their children with strangers in order to secure food and shelter for their families. Some arrangements, like indenture and apprenticeship, proved more appealing than the alternatives which included starvation and the callous practice of forcing the poor out of local communities, "warning out."

White, free, non-propertied parents used the systems of indenture and apprenticeship to manage the care of their children during the eighteenth century. Parental status guaranteed the living situation of an indentured or apprenticed child. Merchants paid a fee to have their teenage sons learn a profession; craftsman contracted to have their sons and daughters trained in an useful skill; and poor parents or their representatives placed children in settings that used a child's labor rather than educated the child.[8]

Gender and age of the child also defined indenture and apprenticeship training and work expectations as evidenced by the following contracts:

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[7] Eileen Boris and Cynthia R. Daniels, eds. *Homework: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Paid Labor at Home* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 2.

[8] For a discussion of education, work, and leisure among eighteenth century children, see pages 70-73 and 79-80 in Constance B. Schulz, "Children and Childhood in Eighteenth Century America," in *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*, Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner, eds. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985): 57-109.

Outerbridge, Rumsey White (October 21, 1771)
Indenture to Joseph Dean, Philadelphia.
Taught the art and mystery of a merchant and bookkeeping, found meat, drank, washing, lodging, apprentice[ship] free, the mother to provide sufficient apparel.
3 years, 6 months.

Brockington, Mary (October 5, 1772)
Captain Thomas Powell and Wife, Philadelphia.
Apprentice, taught housewifery and sew, time to go to school two years, the grandfather paying expense of schooling and the master to give such further schooling as will perfect her in reading and writing.
To be found all necessaries and at expiration have freedom dues.
12 years, 9 months.[9]

With few exceptions, girls received training in housewifery, while a boy's service depended on the position of his father. Both girls and boys received a strong dose of moral teachings as part of their training. Unmarried or widowed mothers used indenture and apprenticeship as a coping strategy when faced with poverty, thus the presence of fathers determined the scope of service among working children.

In addition to new work arrangements, the Industrial Revolution ushered in ideas about how parents should provide for their families and parent their children. The acceptance of male rather than female wage-earning contained women in the household where they became the primary care givers in the family. As historian Jeanne Boydston argues in her study of women's unpaid labor in the home, by the early nineteenth century, "the ability to attend personally to one's children was one of the marks of a good mother."[10] Of course, the luxury of caring for one's own children belonged to the rather small middle- and upper classes. Most families — free and slave — had to devise alternate ways to care for their children.

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[9] "Record of Indentures. . . the City of Philadelphia, October 3, 1771 to October 5, 1773," The Pennsylvania-German Society, Proceedings and Addresses, vol. 16 (Lancaster, 1907) as cited in Nancy Woloch, *Early American Women: A Documentary History 1600-1900* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1992), 77, 79.

[10] Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 81.

African families living in a system of chattel slavery in colonial and antebellum America were forced to invent vastly different strategies to cope with family responsibilities. With no legal connection to their biological children, the enslaved community embraced all children as their own, denying the constraints of a white nuclear model. Scholarship on enslaved communities now recognizes that many slave children lived with their mother and father until the age of ten, at which time he or she risked sale to another plantation.[11] Nevertheless, the real fear of children losing their parents to death, disease or bill of sale created an extended family beyond the nuclear, and generally spanned several plantations.[12]

Left without the benefits of indenture or apprenticeship, enslaved children often accompanied their parents to the worksite. For instance, mothers took their infants to the fields so that they could continue nursing them. Once weaned, toddlers stayed in the slave compounds for most of their day, sometimes unsupervised for hours at a time. An observer of plantation life commented that young slave children, "were left, during a great proportion of the day, on the ground at the doors of their own huts, to their own struggles and efforts."[13] In a few instances, children not yet old enough to enter the fields took care of infants and toddlers; however, older women respected for their knowledge of child rearing, often took on this job after they could no longer endure field work.[14] Enslaved children between the ages of seven and ten years usually joined their parents in the fields as plantation workers.

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[11] Prior to the work of Herbert G. Gutman, historians gave little recognition to the nuclear unit that existed for a young slave child, but rather, focused on the separation of the nuclear family within enslaved communities. See Herbert G. Guttman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon, 1976); and Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, From Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985) for a reinterpretation.

[12] Schulz, "Children and Childhood," 79; and Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth Century America* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[13] Samuel Stanhope Smith, *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species* (Philadelphia, 1787) as quoted in Schulz, "Children and Childhood," 79.

[14] Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 113-116.

Mothers who worked inside the plantation home did not have the same kinds of access to their own children because they were forced to devote their day to their mistress and her children. These slave mothers left their toddler and young children each morning until late in the night, weaning their own babies much earlier than desirable in order to breastfeed white babies. Consequently, enslaved mothers assigned to the "Big House" came to depend on their aunts, mothers, sisters, and friends to care for their children. This tradition of communal and shared child rearing would prove critical in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century when African Americans began migrating from the rural South into the urbanized North, and families depended on an extended network to help raise and nurture African American children.

A much different situation developed in white communities. The political and economic transformation that arrived with the nineteenth century allowed white men access to new civil and political freedoms. Intertwined in this access was the white man's ability to work for wages, tying the concept of independence to waged-labor, and creating intensely negative consequences for those excluded from sustainable waged-labor.[15] Enslaved peoples, members of American Indian nations, women of all races and ethnicities, and individuals who through physical disability or mental incapacity could not work were all excluded from waged-labor, thus becoming "dependent" in the minds of white, male citizens.

Historians such as David Roediger have explained how workingmen used the labor of excluded peoples to ensure their place in the work world,[16] and feminist scholars have made clear that much of that labor included the unpaid work performed by women in the home.[17] They state further that gender, race, class, and ethnicity defined this reproduction

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[15] Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*; and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[16] Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness.*

[17] The literature to explain the reproduction of labor is expansive. As Maureen Mackintosh explained, "reproduction has been a very vexed concept in feminist theory. It has been used with a variety of different definitions, and the theoretical debate in this area is still very much open." See Maureen Mackintosh, "Gender and Economics: the Sexual Division of Labour and the Subordination of

of labor, because only white, native-born, middle-class families could hope to participate in such a rigid separation of public and private spheres. Fraser and Gordon argue that these characteristics also allowed workers (usually, but not always white men) to fight for higher wages and to use that fight "as a vehicle for elaborating meanings of dependence and independence."[18] Boydston explains this exclusion in gendered terms; that as more men entered the waged economy, more women became contained within the home performing unpaid housework, a job that became specifically defined as "women's work." She emphasizes that at least for the northeastern United States:

> Women bore the primary, virtually exclusive, responsibility for the day-to-day emotional and material arrangements of the family. An unmarried man, or a married man whose wife was temporarily incapacitated, might on an emergency basis be required to cook, clean, wash, or tend the children, of course. But no man with a healthy wife or adult daughter would expect for a moment to take on these duties.[19]

Instead, white men began to insist that it was their right as independent citizens to earn a wage large enough for a man to single-handedly support his family. Known as a "family wage," American workers considered this ideal as early as the 1820s as a way to relieve working-class poverty.[20] Boydston points out that the family wage was "an ideal shared by members of the new middle class, who confidently celebrated what they supposed to be the complete and successful withdrawal of wives and daughters to . . . the middle-class home, where neither 'strife' nor 'selfishness' could enter."[21] The concept of

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Women," in *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's Subordination Internationally and its Lessons*, Kate Young, Carol Wolkowitz and Roslyn McCullagh, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 1988): 3-17.

For the purposes of this study, I refer to women's roles as not only the biological bearers of children, but as also the primary providers of care, maintenance, and socialization of children and adult individuals. See Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, "Subsistence Production and Extended Reproduction," in *Of Marriage and the Market*, pp. 41-54; Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in Lydia Sargent, ed. *Women and Revolution: The Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); and Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (London: Zen Books, Ltd., 1986) for a thorough discussion of this topic.

[18] Fraser and Gordon,"A Geneology of *Dependency*," 319.

[19] Boydston, *Home and Work*, 74.

[20] Martha May, "The Historical Problem of the Family Wage: The Ford Motor Company and the Five Dollar Day," *Feminist Studies* 8 (Summer 1982): 399-424.

[21] Boydston, *Home and Work*, 99.

the family wage included stipulations about family roles such as who should sustain the economic security of the family, who should socialize the family members to cultural values, and who should be responsible for maintaining those same cultural values. Men would leave the sanctity of the home and earn wages while women remained in that home to care for the family.

Average wages for white working-class men, however, could not sustain whole families, forcing them to depend on their wives and children for additional income. Hence, most working-class families (whether native-born, immigrant, or formerly enslaved), survived by pooling earnings among family members. Under the family wage, the connection between financial success and respectability haunted the American male. If he failed to earn, he risked accusations of idleness, intemperance and immorality. Because men were seen as the only legitimate contributors, families who relied on women's wages became suspect to charges of immorality.

This ideology proved particularly vexing for African American families; once free, men could not find work specifically because of their race, while women found employment based strictly on their position as Black women.[22] Furthermore, that work was always the lowest paid, least stable, and inflexible. Obligated to labor for long hours in situations that often took them far from their homes, many African American women relied on relatives to help them with the care of their children. Thus, when women began relocating from the rural to urban South in search of jobs during Reconstruction, the structure of the African American family continued to revolve around an extended rather than nuclear arrangement. Still later, during the "Great Migration" into the North beginning in the 1910s, Black women left their children in the South until the time when they were financially able to provide for them.

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[22] Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 111.

Most two-parent, Anglo working-class families ordered their lives around a father who labored outside the home and a mother who engaged in both child rearing and wage earning. Single-parent families, predominantly female-headed, depended on a woman as the primary wage-earner, a situation which cast a shadow of deviancy on these households. Seen as abnormal, families with wage-earning mothers risked losing their children to the institutional care that evolved in the early nineteenth century as a remedy to these abnormal families. Because that care was understood as a need for working women, it took the form of relief for the poor rather than as a benefit for workers. Not only did "worker" become understood as white and male, but child care became understood as relief for impoverished, and even destitute, white mothers. Hence, the first forms of poor relief became tied to white mothers and motherhood, casting a negative light in most citizens minds on such assistance.

Consider the way in which the Boston Infant School, established in 1828, handled its "mother problem." By boarding the children of destitute women, the School believed it enabled mothers to seek employment by "relieving" them of the domestic responsibility of child care.[23] In reality, school trustees probably created the facility more for balancing the community budget than for good will toward Boston mothers. Colonial poor laws nearly bankrupted many American cities in the early nineteenth century.[24] Finances had not improved by mid-century; in fact, many state treasuries became seriously jeopardized. For instance, Boston's public aid expenditures rose in one year from $44,107 in 1857 to $62,800 because of assistance to impoverished residents, many of whom were women supporting children.[25]

Officials searched for solutions to their indigent problem and found their answer in putting these citizens to work. Boston had struggled with keeping widows and their

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[23] Steinfels, *Who's Minding the Children*, 36.

[24] Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), 137-139.

[25] Ibid., 139.

children off relief budgets since the early eighteenth century. The colonies of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut used the system of "warning out" to discourage fatherless, poor families from settling in their towns and villages.[26] When a single woman entered a community she was officially warned that she and her children were ineligible for public charitable funds. This warning came with the expectation that these women would pass through the town rather than look for shelter and alms. By the mid-eighteenth century, Bostonians raised £900 to build a workhouse for poor widows. These women resisted, however, the attempts of town leaders to regulate their lives and mark them as workhouse residents, an indignity they refused to accept for themselves and their children. The venture failed, only to be replaced by a manufacturing enterprise that promised to employ local women and children in the service of spinning. But Boston's poor mothers continued to resist the city's attempt to make them productive factory workers by choosing homework over textile mills. Widows especially preferred to take work into their homes so that they could both earn wages and complete their domestic duties.[27]

Workers operated under generally poor conditions throughout the nineteenth century, but for a woman who had just given birth, the long hours of back-breaking domestic service or piece work often proved harmful to her newborn child. Weak and malnourished, many mothers could not produce sufficient milk to feed their babies. Likewise, as the practice of using wet nurses grew in popularity among middle-class families, many of the wet nurses own babies suffered from starvation.[28] While infant mortality had long been a problem in colonial America, awareness of the issue reached new heights in the mid-nineteenth century as middle-class women began to take interest in reforming the urban city.[29] For instance, supporters of the New York Hospital created

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[26] Kessler Harris, *Out to Work*, 17.

[27] Edith Abbott, "A Study of the Early History of Child Labor in America," *American Journal of Sociology* 14 (July 1908): 21 as cited in Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 17.

[28] Janet Golden, "Trouble in the Nursery: Physicians, Families, and Wet Nurses at the End of the Nineteenth Century," in *'To Toil the Livelong Day'*, 125-41.

[29] Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth Century United States* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

their Nursery for the Children of Poor Women in 1854 as one effort to regulate infant health.[30] Facilities like the New York nursery did help working mothers with their newborns, yet the solution was short-lived since the problem of finding infant care continued to plague working mothers into and throughout the twentieth century.[31]

Budgetary drains and growing interest in educational reforms forced states by the mid-nineteenth century to begin examining their policies regarding indigent children who lived in almshouses with their parents. Four methods emerged in the nation, all of which ultimately separated children from their families to place them under institutional "protection." The policies enacted in Massachusetts, New York, Ohio and Michigan exemplified the various forms this legislation took.[32] Massachusetts created a foster-home care system; New York instituted a network of state-subsidized, private, child care agencies and institutions; and Ohio utilized a method of county orphanages. Michigan became the first state to establish a non-sectarian state institution for children of the poor when, in 1871, its governor asked the legislature to pass Public Act No. 172 to, "relieve the condition of the children in county houses."[33] The legislature agreed, and by 1874, the Michigan Public School, built in the southernmost border of the state, began receiving children.

These policies set the precedent for removing unsupervised children from their homes. Prior to the establishment of day nurseries in the 1880s, most children — either orphaned or left alone while their mothers worked — were committed to institutional care. Policy makers pointed to the high incidence of child labor among the poor as their rationale

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[30] Steinfels, *Who's Minding the Children*, 36.

[31] The most comprehensive scholarly review of the current debate can be found in Sandra Scarr, Deborah Phillips and Kathleen McCartny, "Working Mothers and Their Families," *American Psychologist* 44, no. 11 (November 1989): 1402-1409. Popular media reports on the issue have exploded since the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act in January, 1993. For a typical example, see James Collins, "The Day-Care Dilemma," *Time* February 3, 1997, 59-60 and 62.

[32] Lois S. Levinson, "History of the Michigan Children's Institute, 1935-1946" (Master's thesis, University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration, 1946), 4.

[33] "Annual Reports 1925-26," in Records of the *Michigan Children's Institute* [hereafter MCI], Box 1, folder 11, State of Michigan Archives, State Historical Center, Lansing, Michigan [hereafter MI Archives].

for committing children to institutions, arguing that at least these children would receive vocational training and become productive citizens rather than labor away their childhood. The philosophies of eugenics and Social Darwinism only strengthened the state-sanctioned policies. As a result, mother-only families bore the brunt of this discriminatory regulation.[34] Since many reformers viewed poverty as a genetic disorder, they believed that removing poor children from their biological families would break the cycle of dependency. An 1875 New York City report stressed that:

> Families dependent on private charity seem to exist only to rear children like themselves. To keep such families together is contrary to sound policy; the sooner they can be separated and broken up, the better it will be for the children and for society at large. Vigorous efforts must be instituted to break the line of pauper descent.[35]

Those vigorous efforts usually involved removing the child from the home. Officials designed institutionalized care to "train, rehabilitate and reform their charges," using a reward system to control the children put in their care.[36] Children who learned the rules quickly found themselves with lighter work loads or were released to their families earlier than planned.[37] To be sure, some children required protection from abusive families, while some indigent parents voluntarily committed their children to institutions believing their decision ensured proper food and shelter for their family. But as social welfare historian Mimi Abramovitz has explained, "large numbers of poor parents lost the right to raise their own children because they were seen as deviating from prescribed homemaker (and breadwinner) roles."[38]

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[34] Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women*, 167.

[35] David M. Schneider and Albert Deutch, *The History of Public Welfare in New York State, 1867-1940* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), 27.

[36] Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women*, 168.

[37] Ibid., 166-68. Representative of most asylums of the time, the Baltimore Home of the Friendless saw it as their mission to enforce upon their young charges "the order and decorum of a well-regulated Christian family." As shown with this facility, even the names of the institutions promoted self-righteousness on the part of the organizers.

[38] Ibid., 167.

By the late nineteenth century, a combination of failures by the state to adequately maintain the physical structure of asylums and the low success rate of "reform" among the children caused state policy makers to shift their thinking away from using institutional child care. Abandoning long-held notions about containing poverty, officials found a solution in the "placing-out" system which removed children from urban homes and placed them in "foster homes" on Midwestern farms or Western ranches. The design of these agrarian, home-like settings was to foster in children Anglo-based values that defined nuclear families and honest hard work. In reality, many children placed in these foster homes became sources of free labor for farmers and ranchers to exploit. Foster parents often overworked the children during peak production cycles, then mistreated them in the off-season by feeding them little more than scraps and sheltering them in barns. Girls placed in homes as domestics often endured physical and sexual abuse by their foster fathers; boys, unprotected from the harsh elements, toiled endlessly in the fields.[39]

The Michigan Public School (MPS) represents a state-operated facility that took in unprotected children. Most of the children admitted to MPS were either orphans or one of their parents had been found incompetent to properly care for them. Children living at MPS could earn their release through a system of indentured adoption. MPS administrators encouraged a sixty-day trial period between adoptive parents and MPS children, during which time the agreement to adopt could be canceled and the child returned to the facility. Statistically, this system seemed to benefit the children: between 1871 and 1927, one-half of the total number of children indentured were admitted to only one home; about one-third of the children entered two homes; and only one-fifth of the children experienced three or more successive homes. MPS administrators used these statistics to point out the success of the indenture system but critics of institutionalizing children

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[39] MCI, Box 1, files 1 - 15. Personal records of the Michigan Institute for Children are sealed for reasons of confidentiality, but the Annual Reports and Monthly Reports to the Board in the administrative files reveal some of the sexual and physical abuse that children became exposed to in Michigan foster homes.

challenged their findings, arguing instead that adoptive couples abused the spirit of adoption by using MPS children for labor in which adult workers could not be secured.[40]

American Indian children also became targets for removal from their parents' homes. Perhaps the greatest example of dependency in America had developed by the 1880s with the containment of American Indian people on federally-controlled reservations. By the late 1870s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs systematically removed selected Indian youths from their tribal homes on reservations and re-located them to non-reservation, industrial training schools. Often located hundreds of miles away from their families, the youths remained isolated from their native cultures and found themselves immersed in an Anglo world which forbid them to talk, dress, or even hint at their Indian heritages. Schools, such as the Hampton Normal Institute in Virginia and Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania, stripped boys and girls of all things Indian, be that clothing, hair style, language, and manner.

Differences in gender roles between Anglo and Indian cultures proved particularly troubling to reformers, so school agendas targeted these areas. For example, the schools regarded "saving" young girls from the drudgery of "squaw" life and the conversion of those girls into respectable "middle-class American housewi[ves]" their special mission.[41] According to western historian Robert Trennart, these industrial schools peaked between 1890 and 1910, during which time as many as twenty-five non-reservation schools were training Indian youths.[42] By the late 1920s, the focus on acculturation waned, thus ending "this particular attempt to convert Native American women into middle-class American housewives."[43] But in the process, thousands of American Indian children lost years of nurturing experiences with their parents, other relatives and friends simply because of their culture.

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[40] Levinson, "History of the Michigan Children's Institute, 1935-1946," 8-10.
[41] Trennart, "Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools," 226-227.
[42] Ibid., 228.
[43] Ibid., 233.

Industrial schools also became an option for the care of white impoverished children whose parents were still alive and involved in their family. Starting in the late nineteenth century, proponents of these schools promised vocational training which would help a young boy or girl support themselves once they reached maturity, thereby stopping the growth of families on relief. California became a leader in promoting this methodology. Adolescent girls ages twelve and older could find shelter at the Chabot School of Domestic Arts in Oakland (founded in 1898), but the beds came with a high price. Required to stay at Chabot for one year, girls also had to pledge to enter domestic service after their training. By 1910, the facility could attract an average of only eight to twelve girls each year.[44] Homes sheltering boys demanded less of a commitment from their charges, yet these institutions were also far less invested in the success and welfare of the boys. In 1910, the Lark Ellen News and Working Boys' Home in Los Angeles moved from center city to a northern tract outside city limits. Persons traveling to the new location by streetcar needed a ten-cent fare which proved too costly for most boys who worked in the downtown district.[45] Consequently, many of these boarders took to the streets.

Critics of poorly-monitored foster homes and cold industrial schools eventually helped reform the system, with states regulating placement homes more closely.[46] In addition, child-help advocates began to persuade officials that perhaps maintaining the family unit provided the best opportunity for children to grow into vital American citizens; their agendas, however, remained informed by an understanding that a white, middle-class, nuclear family provided the only model on which to shape successful families. The

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[44] William H. Slingerland, *Child Welfare Work in California: A Study of Agencies and Institutions* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1916), 79-80.

[45] Ibid., 78.

[46] Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives*, 170-71. Abramovitz explained that, "the earlier preference for breaking up families as the most morally and economically efficient method of enforcing prevailing work and family norms and maintaining the future labor force lost some, if not all, of its favor. The criticisms of both asylums and the placing-out process paved the way for programs which encouraged the de-institutionalization of children and their placement in families."

expansion of the day nursery fit into this new philosophy of trying to keep mothers and children together.

Day Nurseries as Maternal Tools of Reform

Middle- and upper-class women created the day nursery in the late nineteenth century "in response" to the dramatic rise in mothers' participation in the waged economy.[47] These women were not trained professionals; instead, they represented a core of activity that historians of American women have written about extensively, the benevolent "true" woman.[48] As managers of the day nurseries, these women tended to the administrative needs of the facilities and hired matrons as the actual care providers. Day nurseries gave turn-of-the-century social reformers a platform for advocating change in child welfare policy, and many used the Club Woman's Movement to relay their messages.[49] Consequently, many day nurseries received substantial financial support as well as volunteer time from members of these organizations.

Club women organized along strict racial and class lines; likewise, the day nurseries at which they served accepted clients who shared similar racial and ethnic backgrounds.[50]

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[47] Durst, "Day Nurseries and Wage-Earning Mothers in the United States, 1890-1930," 1.

[48] Work by the following historians offers a good foundation to understanding the ideals of True Womanhood: Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*; Elizabeth Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," 145-164 in *The Woman's West*, Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1 (Autumn 1975): 1-29; and Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-174.

[49] As Judith Rafferty explains in her study of club women in Los Angeles, "women's clubs flourished both as cultural clubs for self betterment and as agencies of reform. Most women joined the clubs for self-improvement, but those who came to further reform did so in an attempt to reshape a society they perceived as corrupted by modernization and its concommitant: industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. Many of these women also hoped to create a more public role for themselves, and eventually for all women, whence they would share civil and political rights with men." See Rafferty, "Los Angeles Clubwomen and Progressive Reform," in *California Progressives Revisited*, William Deverell and Tom Sitton, eds. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 144.

[50] Research on African American club women has tended to emphasize their contributions instead of the lives of the women these activists served. These descriptions have provided , however, the necessary foundations for future analytical work. (I owe my heightened understanding of the

Black and white children seldom mixed, and organizers devised separate facilities for Asian, American Indian, and Latino children. In fact, most day nurseries catered to Anglo children even though they were generally divided by ethnicity and religion.[51] Indeed, Christian and Jewish children, even if they shared a national heritage such as German or Polish, attended separate nurseries.

Day nurseries also became an avenue for middle-class, college-educated women — popularly referred to as New Women — to expand their influence from the private world of the home into the public sphere of waged work. No longer a purely volunteer activity, time spent in day nurseries represented some of the first professional experience garnered by these New Women, many of whom delved into the world of reform. The settlement house movement proved to be a popular center for their reform activities, and these women incorporated day nurseries into the whole host of programs offered at most settlement sites. Anglo women used day nurseries to legitimate their choice to enter professional life;

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importance of contributory women's history to a lecture by Gerda Lerner, "Women's Search for Women's History," 30 March 1993, Michigan State University.) Linda Gordon's comparative work on white and black female Progressive reformers, noted directly below, goes beyond contributory history to analyze how issues of class affected these women within their communities and allowed them to dictate their philosophies of "social uplift." Elizabeth Lasch Quinn's work on the African American settlement house movement, *Black Neighbors*, is also an excellent resource on this topic.

Studies on the activities of African American women in the Club Movement include Kathleen C. Berkeley, " 'Colored Ladies also Contributed': Black Women's Activities from Benevolence to Social Welfare, 1866-1896," in *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family and Education*, Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985): 181-203; Constance A. Cunningham, "The Sin of Omission: Black Women in Nineteenth Century American History," *Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 33 (Winter 1987): 35-46; Earline Rae Ferguson, "The Woman's Improvement Club of Indianapolis: Black Women Pioneers in Tuberculosis Work, 1903-1938," in *Black Women in United States History*, Darlene Clark Hine, ed. (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1990) Vol. 6: 339-63; Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Daughters of Sorrow: Atttiudes Toward Black Women, 1880-1920* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1990); and Wilson Jeremiah Moses, "Domestic Feminist Conservatism, Sex Roles, and Black Women's Clubs 1893-1896," *Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 24 (Fall 1987): 166-77.

Work on Anglo American women and their clubs include Karen Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meir, 1980); Robin Everist, "Women Stretching Outwards: Feminism and the Club Woman Movement in the United States at the Turn of the Century," *Lilith* 2 (Winter 1985): 30-39; Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*; Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers," 145-164; and Rafferty, "Los Angeles Clubwomen and Progressive Reform," 144-174.

[51] See for example Rose, "From Sponge Cake to Hamentashen, 3-23," for an interesting study of class relations at a settlement house for Jewish immigrants in Philadelphia.

for African American women, the day nursery became a tool in which to socially uplift their race.[52]

Whatever professional credentials they brought to the endeavor, these early day nursery organizers recognized the unique needs of working-class mothers and offered services that current standards would consider outstanding. For instance, if a mother became ill, the nursery would care for the child overnight or send a visiting nurse to the mother's home.[53] The temporary boarding of children due to sickness, death, or abandonment was not unusual among day nurseries. The situation of Mrs. M. O'Malley illustrates a typical boarding arrangement. O'Malley took her three daughters to the San Diego Day Nursery in July 1890 after their father abandoned the family. At ages eight, six, and four years, the girls presented too great a challenge for this single mother who worked in the Baja California port of Ensenada. O'Malley used the facility as a temporary boarding arrangement for her children, sending the nursery a $5.00 monthly payment for their care. On January 12, 1891, O'Malley secured housekeeping work in San Diego and collected her children.[54]

As one of many programs connected to the settlement house, day nurseries became sites for developing immigrants into "respectable" citizens, or Americanization. Parenting skills could be evaluated, monitored, and criticized at a day nursery. As reform-minded women, organizers of day nurseries admonished what they grouped as the undesirable habits of working-class men such as drinking and gambling that tore families apart. Day nursery trustees regularly defined these fathers as "parasites," "shiftless and indolent," "worthless and dissipated," and "walking beer-kegs," and they coined mothers who used

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[52] Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (February 1992): 19-54; Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984); and Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors.*

[53] Steinfels, *Who's Minding the Children*, 42-43.

[54] San Diego Day Nursery Register 1880-1909, Entries 42-44, San Diego Center for Children Collection [hereafter SDCC], Box 17, SDHS. San Diego Day Nursery workers used the register to record details of family lives, therefore, I have chosen to change all names in the register to protect client confidentiality.

the nurseries as "helpless" victims.[55] The Cleveland Day Nursery Association blamed deserting and abusive fathers for "crowded day nurseries," and heartily admonished those men physically able to work but dependent on their wives for support.[56]

The primary mission of those women operating day nurseries remained keeping the family intact. Coming on the heels of de-institutionalization, day nursery advocates prided themselves on developing a counter plan to the removal of children from their mothers. In this way, mothers could retain their self-respect as loving and responsible parents. By paying for child care — even if they could only afford very nominal rates — critics could not argue that working mothers neglected their children or depended on charity for subsistence.[57] When critics began suggesting the closing of day nurseries, organizers turned to a rhetoric that tied mothers to the responsibility of paying for their children's care. To that end, many day nurseries took on the function of self-styled employment agencies that found mothers day work. The work generally consisted of poorly-paid service work, yet organizers believed it helped mothers maintain a kind of dignity in their poverty.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels has argued that "day nurseries considered themselves a substitute for home and mother; in some cases, a substitute better than home and mother."[58] Comments by care providers at the Armitage Day Nursery in New York City reflected the ideals of a nation struggling to cope with the reality of mothers in the workforce:

> It has been said that the most important period in the foundation of character is from two to eight years of age. If this is true, what are the possibilities and responsibilities of the day nursery and kindergarten? Who has not felt disheartened when visiting among the poor, at the incapability of the mothers to make and keep a home in the truest sense? And who has not noted in men seeking employment in time of business depression the lack of adaptability to the needs of the hour? It is to lay the foundation for these

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[55] Durst, "Day Nurseries and Wage-Earning Mothers," 153-154.
[56] Ibid., 154.
[57] Ibid., 143.
[58] Steinfels, *Who's Minding the Children*, 44.

> elements, so essential to successful manhood and womanhood, that we are striving in our work.[59]

The Helen Day Nursery in Chicago, which opened in 1905, described itself as:

> A place where children who need shelter and protection by day or night may be cared for during the mother's working hours; a place which shall provide temporary refuge in emergency; and an industrial, educational, and social center for mothers from which shall emanate standards of respectable living.[60]

The Chicago center reflected a growing national sentiment regarding the temperament of those in need of services; that mothers who earned wages must be suspect and, thus, in need of guidance. This shift from the original motivation of day nursery organizers — to help wage-earning mothers — had much to do with changes in the professional world of child help. The gradual acceptance of psychology and the emergence of social workers in the day nursery created a more hostile environment for working mothers. The nursery shifted from a facility that cared for both mothers and children to educational centers that could save impoverished children from abuse and ignorance at home. Josephine Jewell Dodge, anti-suffragist, New York philanthropist, and inaugural president of the National Federation of Day Nurseries (NFDN), believed strongly in the civilizing power of the day nursery. She noted at the 1905 NFDN conference that day nurseries were "essential in helping to train the otherwise neglected children for good citizenship."[61]

Day nursery staff often turned away children from families where both parents earned wages, arguing that a father's wage should be sufficient to support his family. Yet by the 1920s, they learned that working-class families could not live within the parameters of the family wage ideal. Organizers of the Passaic Day Nursery, which served wool mill workers in New Jersey, were forced to re-think their rule regarding children from two-

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[59] As cited on page 45 in Ibid.

[60] H. Solomon, "Helen Day Nursery of Chicago," *Charities* 18 (July 20, 1907): 438-39.

[61] Quoted in Steinfels, *Who's Minding the Children*, 147.

earner families. When interviewed about the problem of married workers, the matron replied:

> We are always besieged by women mill workers whose husbands are also working, who want us to care for their children. It is against our rules to care for children when both parents are working. But lately we have begun to let some of these children come. We can hardly refuse them, with the cost of living and rent so high, and when the women say they simply can't get along on just the father's wages. There is going to be a new day nursery soon. The Gera Mills are going to have one right inside the factory.[62]

It is important to underscore who used day nurseries for child care in order to fully grasp the classism of statements like those of the Cleveland group or even the Passaic matron. Middle- and upper-class families did not use day nurseries, even if troubled by death or sickness. Abandonment among these privileged classes certainly occurred, but it was never so blatantly revealed as with working-class people. Economically-secure families supported but never used day nurseries, therefore, supporters could save their critiques of the family for the working-classes. All classes embraced the family wage but only those with disposable income could hope to participate, thereby escaping judgments about *their* parenting abilities.

Although their name implies that they cared for only preschool children, day nurseries also offered before- and after-school care for boys and girls. In addition to providing respite from the street, workers gave some attention to skills training. Curriculums suggest the persistence of the sexual division of labor; girls received a domestic-centered program that included instruction in sewing, cooking, knitting, and kitchen gardening, while manual labor and industrial arts dominated the boys' training.

Unfortunately, the average day nursery was unsuccessful in its attempts to provide both quality shelter and instruction for children, and as an institution the day nursery became a target of Progressive reformers. Confused with long-term care operations, such

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[62] Eloise Shellabarger, "The Shawled Women of Passaic," *The Survey* 44 (July 3, 1920): 463-468 (quote on 464).

as boarding homes, day nurseries were judged alongside facilities with vastly different agendas and objectives for the children in their care. In 1916, the Russell Sage Foundation published William H. Slingerland's study on child-help agencies and institutions in California. His outline of 157 facilities resulted in an indictment that the state relied too heavily on institutional care for its dependent children.[63] New York and California led the nation in the number of children cared for and the dollars expended in maintaining institutional child care. That distribution led contributing author Hastings H. Hart, to charge that California officials had been lax in developing a program where dependent and delinquent children were transferred to the "friendly environment of family homes."[64]

Progressive reforms in child protection created state licensing laws designed to regulate child care facilities. In Michigan, numerous complaints regarding the care of children placed in private societies and boarding homes sparked the legislature to pass Public Act 300 which outlined child welfare regulations.[65] Beginning in 1913, the State Board of Charities in California enlisted Slingerland's study to leverage the court to close nonsectarian orphanages and homes they judged unsafe. Slingerland deemed the children's quarters at the Bertha Juilly Home, located in Los Angeles' Lomita Park and founded in 1900, as "poorly adapted, unsanitary, and badly furnished."[66] He reported that Juilly employed an unusually callous way of maintaining the privacy of her clients, charging that "Mrs. Juilly uses porch basket with electric call bell; parties can place baby in basket and

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[63] Slingerland, *Child Welfare Work in California*, iii. The California study was part of a larger project by the foundation that included analyses by Slinglerland of Pennsylvania and Washington, and of Maryland by Miss Florence Lattimore. The studies concluded that the subsidy system used in California, New York, Maryland and Pennsylvania "resulted in multiplying unduly the number of institution children." Moreover, while these states greatly subsidized the care of dependent children, a system to supervise the "vast appropriations" had only been developed in 1911 (pp. 7-10).

[64] Ibid., 4. Hastings was the director of the Department of Child-Helping at the Russell Sage Foundation.

[65] Robert James Stefanovich, "The Development of Child Care Center Licensing in Michigan from the Inception of the First Standards to the Promulgation of the 1980 Administration Rules," (Ph.D. dissertation, Wayne State University, 1982), 41 and 81. The Act did not apply to any institution caring for children maintained or operated by the State.

[66] Slingerland, *Child Welfare Work in California*, 77.

retire without recognition. Nearly all inmates thus received."[67] The facility also had a poor record with placing children in adoption. Reports indicated that Juilly seldom tried to arrange adoptions, and those few children who were adopted received no supervision after their placement.

In 1914, the Belle White Home, also in Los Angeles, came under fire by the State Board as a "very crude, poorly furnished, and unsanitary" facility.[68] Founded in 1906, Belle White cared for an average of thirty-five children — most of whom were the children of working mothers — at an average expense per capita well below that of most other boarding homes in California. The investigative actions of the State Board of Charities resulted in the closures of both these facilities.[69]

Incidents like those cited above helped convince government officials that professionals needed to play more critical roles in the administration of child-help agencies and institutions, including the day nursery. Standards defining appropriate care in day nurseries began to reflect educational rather than custodial approaches to child care. Whereas day nurseries once prided themselves in finding mothers employment, by the early twentieth century day nursery matrons supported the belief that "proper" mothers should raise their children in the safety of their own home. Likewise, while in the 1890s day nursery staff had encouraged wage-earning mothers to bring children to the facility, by the 1910s, mothers faced embarrassing screening questions which supposedly ensured that women using the nursery worked out of economic necessity.

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 78.

[69] Ibid., 76. Slingerland reported that, "In the main these are worthy homes doing excellent work; but there are a few inferior institutions in the group which should be standardized or closed."

Assistance or Regulation? "Controlling" Wage-earning Mothers

Women became the prime targets for official sanction, and single mothers and their families endured the greatest oppression through poverty, sexism, xenophobia, racism, and ethnic discrimination. In her study of domestic violence in Boston, Linda Gordon discovered that unmarried mothers were consistently over-represented in charges of negligence and family violence cases, arguing that "in no other group of the working class were the changes in family and interpersonal relationships caused by the transition to industrial society so great."[70] Charges of negligence often caused authorities to remove children from their homes, and Gordon found that three factors contributed to a mother's decision to leave her children either unattended or improperly attended. First, single mothers raised their families in homes surrounded by poverty, vice, and insecurity, creating a highly stressful environment in which to make good parenting decisions. Second, single mothers struggled to survive with little assistance from kinship or community support groups; and third, single mothers were suspect by the very definition of motherhood as a position sanctioned only by marriage.

Reformers acting in the period between 1880 and 1920 created great changes in the social welfare system, many of which centered on expanding the "state's social welfare apparatus for women and children."[71] Single mothers thought to be raising too many of the nation's children received much of this attention. Initiated by women for women, the actions to change the social welfare system have come to be known as "maternalism." Historians Seth Koven and Sonya Michel have defined maternalism as "ideologies and discourses that exalted women's capacity to mother and applied to society as a whole the values they attached to that role: care, nurturance, and morality."[72] These key features help in classifying as maternalist the broad range of activities performed by diverse groups of

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[70] Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives*, 84.
[71] Koven and Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World*, 4.
[72] Ibid.

women during this time. According to Koven and Michel, maternalists used "political discourse and strategies to transform motherhood from woman's primary private responsibility into public policy."[73]

The rise of maternalism brought a heightened awareness of the constraints some class positions forced on mothers. Maternalist reformers during the Progressive Era — most notably Josephine Baker, M.D.; Josephine Goldmark, Secretary of the Committee on Legislation and Legal Defense of Labor Laws and a key crafter of the Brandeis Brief on protective labor legislation; and Children's Bureau staffers — argued that pregnant and newly-delivered mothers needed to be released from wage-work in order to ensure the safe deliveries of their babies and to be able to produce plentiful breast milk for those newborns. Their advocacy resulted in the implementation of some of the most controversial social welfare programs, namely Mothers' Pensions and the Sheppherd-Towner Act.[74]

The creation of the Children's Bureau represents one of the most influential outcomes of maternalist thought. Established in 1912 as a division of the Department of Commerce and Labor, the Children's Bureau would become, according to historian Molly Ladd-Taylor, the "most important organization in the maternal - and infant health movement in the 1910s and 1920s."[75] Born out of the settlement house movement, the Children's Bureau provided a stimulating arena for maternalist reformers to develop maternal and child saving assistance programs. Establishing state-funded pensions to women for the work of mothering marked perhaps their most successful effort.

Paid motherhood was intended to de-stigmatize relief by framing it as an honorable "salary of sorts for public service," but not all single mothers qualified for the aid.[76] In

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[73] Ibid., 2.

[74] See Mink, *Wages of Motherhood*, 53-73; Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, especially Chapters 2-4; and Part III of Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* on the way maternalism influenced the development and implementation of such mother-centered programs as Mothers' Pensions and the Sheppard-Towner Act.

[75] Molly Ladd-Taylor, " 'My Work Came Out of Agony and Grief': Mothers and the Making of the Sheppard-Towner Act," in *Mothers of a New World*, Koven and Michel, eds., 324.

[76] Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 465.

fact, state commissions judged which mothers could earn that salary, and only mothers who upon investigation were found to be morally sound qualified for a pension. Thus, Mother's Pensions made the state both employer and judge of single mothers.

Usually, only married mothers fit the definition of a "worthy" woman, and only three states (Michigan, Tennessee and Nebraska) allowed unmarried mothers to even apply for a pension.[77] States encouraged pension requests from widows, and some recognized the situations of deserted and divorced mothers as honorable, citing the husband/father as soley responsible for the family's chaotic plight. However, as historian Joanne Goodwin found for the case of Chicago, administrators also rejected many mothers who appeared to be "adequate earners," creating a low or no income-earning clientele.[78] This focus on indigence stigmatized women using Mothers' Pensions as dependent on the state rather than capable supporters for their families.

As one of a set of reforms designed to remove mothers from the workforce, Mothers' Pensions singled out female-headed households as "abnormal" homes; abnormal because they lacked both a father to provide for their financial security and a mother who could devote her life to monitoring her children's physical and mental growth. Supporters of Mothers' Pensions believed that aid to qualified single mothers would ultimately reduce the risk of turning out delinquent, physically unhealthy, and ignorant children. Championed by what Ladd-Taylor has referred to as "sentimental" maternalists such as members of the National Mothers' Congress and "Progressive" maternalists like Children's Bureau staffers, pensions for the work of mothering entered the national arena as the solution to keeping mothers and children together.[79]

In 1911, Illinois became the first state to adopt a Mothers' Pension law, and eighteen states quickly followed suit in 1913. By 1920, over three-quarters of the states

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[77] Ibid., 467.

[78] Joanne Goodwin, "Gender, Politics, and Welfare Reform: Mothers' Pensions in Chicago, 1900-1930 (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1991), 276.

[79] Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 43-103.

enacted some form of public mothers' aid.[80] A number of scholars have recently interrogated how the 'wildfire spread' of Mothers' Pensions took off during the Progressive Era, noting how women-led groups entered the political sphere to advocate for as well as negotiate in the development of public aid to female-headed households. They also agree with Linda Gordon who explained that "mothers' aid became the model not only for ADC [Aid for Dependent Children] but for all the programs today called 'welfare'."[81] In a thorough examination that chronicles the political maneuverings of state acceptance and implementation of Mothers' Pensions, Theda Skocpol argues that literacy rather than urbanization caused the spark that lit the mothers' aid reform.[82] Whatever the cause for its popularity, Mothers' Pensions found favor among mothers, reformers, and government officials alike.

Reformers envisioned paid motherhood as the solution to keeping fatherless children out of orphanages and widowed mothers out of the workforce, thereby eliminating the need for day nurseries. Sonya Michel points out that maternalist reformers showed their ambivalence toward the day nursery "in the halting and highly qualified manner in which they advocated for day nurseries and in their reluctance to seek governmental financing."[83] Political scientist Gwendolyn Mink has argued that by the 1910s, settlement houses used the day nursery as a tool for Americanization rather than as a support for working mothers.[84] Whereas helping wage-earning mothers was the original goal (and success) of day nurseries, settlement house workers now seemed devoted to child welfare, an idea that had little room for absent mothers. Mothers' Pensions would keep those mothers at home. Thus, the implementation of Mothers' Pensions did little to promote day nurseries as a realistic support for working mothers. In fact, some reformers hoped that

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[80] Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 456-59.

[81] Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, 37.

[82] Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 459.

[83] Sonya Michel, "The Limits of Maternalism: Policies Toward American Wage-Earning Mothers During the Progressive Era," in *Mothers of a New World*, Koven and Michel, eds., 279.

[84] Mink, *Wages of Motherhood*, 47.

the spread of Mothers' Pensions would help to close day nurseries. As Michel argues, the spread of child care programs "threatened to undermine the notion of motherhood as women's naturally ordained and most important role."[85]

But Mothers' Pensions rarely covered a family's expenses, and most recipients continued to earn wages in addition to collecting their pension. A critical irony arose in that pensioned mothers often continued to use the day nursery for child care. Mink points out that Mothers' Pension advocates may have viewed motherhood as a "natural" vocation for women, but they "did not believe that the quality of motherhood was either natural or automatic."[86] Strengthening motherhood, and through it child welfare, were always the goals of Mothers' Pensions. Moreover, Mink argues:

> The value maternalists assigned to the work of motherhood depended on the reproduction of biologically, culturally, and ideologically "fit" citizens. Behind public intervention into the practice of motherhood lurked the fear that ethnic, racial, and class deviations from Anglo-American, middle-class maternal norms imperiled the cultural and ideological reproduction of a distinctively American citizenry. Maternalist reformers fashioned universalizing policies, building a welfare state that linked the uplift of women's material conditions through social provision to the uplift of mothers' character and quality through Americanization.[87]

In explaining the popularity of Mothers' Pensions, Michel noted that "they affirmed women's maternal role, whereas child care (had it ever been put on the public agenda) would have challenged it. . . . [Furthermore, they] upheld a traditional division of labor between women and men."[88] But recipients, no matter where they lived, were overwhelmingly white and native-born, thus any success must be seen in purely Anglo terms. The demand by states that recipients fit their criteria of a "worthy" and "honorable" American mother fed the intense discrimination already experienced by women of color. Embracing racial stereotypes, Anglo reformers marked African American women as

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[85] Michel, "The Limits of Maternalism, 279.
[86] Mink, *Wages of Motherhood*, 27-29.
[87] Ibid., 28.
[88] Michel, "The Limits of Maternalism," 306.

morally unfit, seldom recognizing that their own racism excluded these mothers from vital aid. According to Mink, because Black women had long toiled outside their homes, "white society defined Black mothers not as women but as workers," a distinction that forced them "outside the boundaries of domesticity, as breeders, sluts, and the caretakers of other women's homes and children."[89] This racist energy would continue to exclude African American women from many of America's public child care programs into and after World War II.

Day nurseries endured in spite of maternalist advocacy for the simple fact that wage-earning mothers needed them. By the 1920s, however, the tone and quality of the care provided at day nurseries changed considerably when professional women began replacing volunteers and uneducated matrons. While not oblivious to the custodial needs of the children in their care, these professionals hoped to elevate the work being done at the facility, by focusing their energies on *educating* children and their parents. More to the point, as teachers and social workers, their professional training had not included instruction in how to tend to the basic needs of infants and toddlers. Consequently, these new day nursery attendants pushed for age requirements, arguing that the nursery was no place for children under the age of three.[90]

The professionalization of day nurseries also led to a decrease in philanthropic dollars donated to the facilities. Many nursery volunteers had both staffed and financially supported daycare; by the 1920s, nurseries had to rely on fee revenues from a most undependable source, their clients. This loss of income forced governing boards to enter the operation, causing nursery staff to resent their lack of autonomy in managing the facility.[91]

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[89] Mink, *Wages of Motherhood*, 51. Mink's footnotes 70 and 71 are particularly useful to understanding this predicament.

[90] Steinfels, *Who's Minding the Children*, 58-59.

[91] Ibid.

Professionals entered the world of child care through day nurseries, but they also changed the scope of that care by implementing the methods of parental education. Yet parents, children, and nursery attendants did not share equally in the success of this new direction. A gap existed between the advice given to wage-earning parents by child development experts, physicians, or public health officials, and the reality of a working mother's needs. Mothers using day nurseries needed to earn wages to shelter and feed their children, not to earn "pin money" as believed by some professionals. Critics of the day nursery began to question its mission as a service that enabled mothers to maintain their positions in the workforce, arguing that more effort needed to be directed toward mending day-care families. Instead, these critics insisted, day nursery staff should adopt case work practices and perform along the lines of social welfare agencies.

In 1919 the National Conference of Social Work devoted key time to discussing day nurseries, with most participants describing families who used the care facilities as "problem families" and "maladjusted."[92] Some social workers employed in day nurseries began to describe a mother's need for child care as pathological. Others recognized the reality of working class lives and hesitated to pass moral judgment on their clients' motivations for seeking help. In her memoirs, social worker Ethel Beer maintained that day nurseries served a vital function in assisting working mothers, stating:

> Most mothers who ask for help from a Day Nursery simply want to place their children, and do not wish advice . . . Often these mothers resent being told what to do, no matter how kindly the intentions. Leaving the office after an intake interview with the Day-Nursery caseworker, Mrs. Santo sputtered: 'I guess I know my own business best. She can refuse my baby if she wants to. But telling me to stay at home is too much!'[93]

Yet, Beer represented the minority view, and by the end of the 1920s, social workers began identifying the day nursery as the worst type of care available for children. The rise of

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[92] Ibid., 61.

[93] Ethel S. Beer, *Working Mothers and the Day Nursery* (New York: Whiteside, Inc., 1957), 121.

early childhood education and its attention to training parents helped influence these ideas. Operating under these prevailing attitudes, day nurseries soon ended up last on a list of care options that included placing a child in foster care.[94] Funded primarily with philanthropic contributions, by 1930 and the onslaught of the Great Depression, day nurseries fell into financial failure.

The Push for Parent Education

After the success of the Mothers' Pension campaigns, women-led organizations like the Children's Bureau grew into strong public advocates of children's health and welfare, dedicating a good deal of their attentions to promoting health among pregnant, newly-delivered, and nursing mothers. Between 1914 and 1921, the Children's Bureau distributed free of charge 1,500,000 copies of the *Prenatal Care* (1913) and *Infant Care* (1914) pamphlets.[95] Women, desperate for advice on their pregnancies and growing babies, wrote the Bureau over 125,000 letters each year. Molly Ladd-Taylor asserts that these letters and replies from Children's Bureau social workers "documents the gap between the competent medical practice assumed in the bulletins and the care the women actually received."[96] Pamphlets like *Prenatal Care* and *Infant Care* gave Progressive maternalists an avenue to train a wide-spectrum of mothers in the harm that unsanitary and unsafe conditions imposed on their families.[97]

State governments also began to use public education to reduce their infant mortality and relief recipients. The Sheppherd-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act, enacted in 1921, allowed for this kind of public intervention. Sheppherd-Towner grew out of the thousands of letters received by the Children's Bureau from mothers who were exposed to

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[94] Steinfels, *Who's Minding the Children*, 66.

[95] Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Raising a Baby the Government Way: Mother's Letters to the Children's Bureau, 1915-1932* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

[96] Ibid., 44.

[97] Ladd-Taylor, *Raising a Baby the Government Way*; and Nancy Pottishman Weiss, "The Mother-Child Dyad Revisited: Perceptions of Mothers and Children in Twentieth Century Child-Rearing Manuals," *Journal of Social Issues* 34 (1978): 29-45.

Bureau pamphlets. In their desperation to receive more information about pregnancy, birth, and infant care, these mothers contacted the Bureau requesting any kernel of advice to solve their parenting dilemmas. Sheppherd-Towner gave federal money to states to develop educational programming which included instruction on nutrition, hygiene, and general maternal/infant care. It also funded child-health clinics and visiting nurses who tended to pregnant and newly delivered women. In order to promote state involvement with the federal government, Sheppherd-Towner moneys were distributed on a matching fund basis. According to Ladd-Taylor, the Sheppherd Towner Act "was the culmination of long-standing efforts to get the government to take responsibility for child welfare," and it became the program in which club women, settlement house residents, and public-health workers collaborated in their maternalism.[98]

During its eight-year tenure, Sheppherd-Towner funds were responsible for dramatic improvements in the health of pregnant and post-partum women, and newborn and infant babies. Politics, however, proved to be the demise of the Sheppherd-Towner Act. Those fearing the expanding power of the federal government required program administrators to apply for funding every five years. In 1929, Congress voted against renewal, and anti-Sheppherd-Towner sentiment among powerful politicians managed to successfully squash the numerous attempts to reinstate the program. Unfortunately, the Sheppherd-Towner Act became merely a piece of short-lived social welfare history.

States that continued public education did so with their own budgets. For example, infant mortality in Michigan during the 1920s ran ahead of the national rate, pushing state officials into taking action against the dilemma. In 1927, the national infant death rate was 65 for every 1,000 live births while maternal death figures totaled 6.5 for every 1,000 live births. Rates in Michigan from 1923-29 averaged 72.9 infant deaths; the maternal death rate fell slightly under the national average with 6.4 deaths for every 1,000 live births.[99] To

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[98] Ladd-Taylor, "Mothers and the Making of the Sheppard-Towner Act," 322.

[99] *The Michigan Manual for Mothers* (Lansing: Michigan Department of Health, 1932), 69.

try to reduce the infant mortality rate, in 1932 public health officers began distributing *The Michigan Manual for Mothers* to new mothers.

The *Manual* defined how mothers should care for themselves during pregnancy and for their infant and pre-school aged children. But in some cases, practical necessity prevented readers from following the directives. For women in "industrial or clerical positions," the *Manual* suggested a six week "vacation" before- and- after the birth of their child, and ordered the women to "avoid heavy work, lifting, straining, stretching, and excessive or violent exercise." It also suggested that working women "take a daily rest and daily walk in the open air and sunshine."[100] Post-partum women would hardly refer to the first six weeks of their baby's life as "vacation"; moreover, a woman involved in the workforce in 1932 hardly occupied a position in which she could demand time for rest and exercise.

The *Manual* admonished mothers throughout its directives, cautioning that uninformed mothers could cause irreparable harm to their children. In regard to habits, the *Manual* stated, "A baby is born with instincts . . . to cry . . . to suck and so on. But from the first day, he begins to form habits. Whether these habits are good or bad depends on the mother."[101] Consider the following prescriptives:

> • Rocking — No baby needs to be rocked, in fact he is better off without it. When it is time for him to sleep, he should be put to bed and left to sleep. He will soon get used to it. (page 27)
>
> • Colic & Vomiting — A baby does not need to have colic and should not vomit. A healthy baby with a *careful mother* (my emphasis) need never be bothered with either. (page 28)
>
> • Bowels — Six weeks is not too young to begin training the baby to have a daily bowel movement over a little chamber. (page 28)
>
> • Crying — Crying is at first a response to something in the baby's surroundings which makes him uncomfortable . . . As he grows older he uses this method of getting his own way. He finds it easier to cry and get

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[100] Ibid., 12.
[101] Ibid., 27.

things done for him than to make an effort to do things for himself. Such bringing up makes for weak character and failure in life. (page 27)

• Proper Food — If the mothers of our state will learn to feed their families properly, there will be no greater factor in accomplishing the production of better babies, in increasing resistance to disease, especially tuberculosis, and in maintaining healthy, efficient adult life with postponement of old age. The mother of a family should have a feeling of guilt if, with plenty of food available, she still has poorly nourished children. (page 49)

Raising their children in the midst of the Great Depression forced many mothers to fall short of the standards proposed in the *Manual.* According to didactic literature, motherhood was a serious profession that carried unconditional responsibility for creating "stronger, finer, more useful citizens" for America no matter their class position.[102] Yet, authors of the *Manual* did not credit most readers with a maturity worthy of their rhetoric. Authors suggested to those health professionals using the *Manual* as a guide for parent training that maternal classes should begin with the enrolled women busying themselves by preparing obstetrical kits for local doctors. They reasoned that "it is often easier to hold the interest of a group of women if they have something to do with their hands and some definite object in attending meetings."[103]

This kind of condescension toward women permeated popular parent education literature, and encouraged competitive parenting; that is, create a child that could be deemed "perfect." A woman could feel guilty from the day she failed to find time for her daily walk to her inability to toilet train her six-week-old baby; however, in examining mother-rearing tracts from 1913 to 1976, historian Nancy Pottishman Weiss found that child-rearing guides "taught women how to live their own lives."[104] Prescriptive parenting information increased at the same time that "Better Babies' Contests" emerged. Some parents who consumed the information printed in mothering manuals believed they exhibited some of the many inadequacies pointed out in the manuals, yet they still entered

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[102] Ibid., dedication page.
[103] Ibid, 1.
[104] Weiss, "The Mother-Child Dyad Revisted, 31.

their child in contests competing for the right to claim their baby as "the most perfect" in the state.[105]

The development of early childhood education as a professional track for young women, however, helped change the condescending attitude of some experts toward mothers. Early childhood education emerged after World War I as one of many attempts by professionals to deal with changes in the twentieth-century family. Influenced by scientific advances, especially those in psychological theory, child-guidance experts turned their attention to the study of young children as one remedy for restoring healthy families to society.[106] Whereas public educators attended to the needs of immigrant and other working-class parents, early childhood educators devoted their expertise to families who did not need Mothers' Pensions, settlement houses, or free health clinics.

Child development experts used the preschool laboratory (referred to as a nursery school) to advance child study by directly engaging middle- and upper-class parents in their project. Parents who took part in the nursery school experience were not in need of day care, but rather, wanted to develop their child's intellect and monitor their own parenting skills. The growth of child development and home economics contributed to a shift away from custodial day care to returning mothers to their homes. Experts involved in these fields believed a child's behavior needed to be nurtured into respectability, and only mothers who stayed at home could successfully monitor that progress. That is not to say they wanted children to remain in the home. On the contrary, early childhood educators encouraged parents to use the preschool laboratory. Generally located on college

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[105] See *Michigan Manual for Mothers*; and "Fourteenth Department—Better Babies' Contest," *Premium List for the 79th Michigan State Fair*, 1928 in MI Archives.

[106] The proliferation of academic journals dedicated to child study during this time illustrates the heightened interest in this new professional field. Examples include *Child Development* (1929); *Childhood Education* (1924); *Child Health Bulletin* (1924); *Children: the Magazine for Parents* (1925); *Child Study* (1923); and *Parent Education* (1934). In his 1938 tribute to fifty years of child study, renowned physician, Arnold Gesell, M.D., director of the Yale Clinic of Child Development, wrote that 1,300 titles existed in 1926 on the "analysis and measurement of human personality" with 56 percent of those titles appearing in the five-year period from 1921 to 1925 (p. 37). See Gessell, "A Half-Century of Science and the American Child," *Child Study* 16 (November 1938): 35-37, and 78-79.

campuses, nursery school programs ran from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. The limited hours alone made the nursery school an impractical day care solution for working parents.

According to education historian Barbara Beatty, the activities of nursery school leaders demonstrated a break from the Progressive Era "social housekeeping" agendas that promoted "voluntarism and women's sphere."[107] Unlike maternalist reformers, nursery school leaders believed that children could best be educated outside the home by those specially trained in the development of children. They believed in an interdisciplinary approach to studying and educating children, and felt it critical to involve the parent in all stages of their findings. In this way, nursery school leaders taught and observed parents along with their original subjects, the children.

Early childhood educators actively pursued a place in the professional world. They advertised their college degrees; mingled with an interdisciplinary group of experts; actively engaged themselves in the collection and examination of scientific research on child development; and welcomed both men and women into their fledgling profession. Private nursery schools became the primary conduit through which these educators promoted their expertise. Experimental from the start, the concept of nursery schools received its greatest financial push from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial which funded all of the prototypical nursery schools that emerged during the 1910s and 1920s.[108]

Nursery school teachers focused on educating the middle - and - upper-class child; however, in the mid-1920s some educators suggested that working-class families could also benefit from the ideas. They argued that day nurseries located in big cities needed to stimulate the dull routines used in the custodial care of children, and the nursery school curriculum would meet that need. The Ruggles Street nursery school in Boston represents a program that evolved from this ideology. Ruggles Street was also unusual in that it treated working-class parents with dignity by respecting their time limitations. Nursery

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[107] Beatty, *Preschool Care in America*, 132.

[108] Ibid., 133. Beatty describes these prototypes on pages 132-168.

schools required parents to participate in regularly scheduled consultations with teachers. Parents who worked long and inflexible hours seldom could involve themselves in nursery school training because of their work schedules. Ruggles Street teachers solved this dilemma by making home visits in the evenings, an unusual practice among early childhood educators. As Beatty reports, the methods of Ruggles Street director Abigail Elliot, enabled her to gather an integrated group of parents at a time when black and white neighbors did not mix.[109]

Schools like Ruggles Street, however, remained a rarity as early childhood educators, for the most part, did not sway from their ideas about class and the nursery school. Even though the Great Depression caused the federal government to look more closely at the differences between nursery schools and day nurseries, in 1930 the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection deemed such a system too experimental. Unfortunately, the conference called attempts to standardize the nursery school into a nationwide public system "premature".[110]

But experts had planted the seed and it took root just three years later with the initiation of government funding of day care centers under the authority of the Works Projects Administration. Commonly known as the WPA Nurseries, the primary objective of the Emergency Nursery Schools provided jobs for the countless unemployed teachers, nurses, nutritionists, clerical workers, cooks, laundresses, and janitors left idle in the nation's cities. Unfortunately, caring for children took a secondary role to that of employing adults; yet, in its first year of operation, 1933-34, nearly 3,000 nurseries provided care to 64,500 children across the country.[111]

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[109] Ibid., 144-145.

[110] Ibid., 170-171; and White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, *Nursery Education: A Survey of Day Nurseries, Nursery Schools, Private Kindergartens in the United States, Section II: Education and Training*, (New York and London: The Century Co., 1931), 136.

[111] "Map 1," in Merrill-Palmer Kresge Historical Library Collection [hereafter MP] located at the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University [hereafter Reuther], Box 64, folder 2.

However, many day nurseries long operating under the auspices of private charitable endeavors fell on financial ruin. Certainly, the fact that mothers could not find work and thus had no need for day nurseries, caused many day nurseries to close. Moreover, those mothers who did continue to earn wages could not part with any of their meager earnings to pay for child care. Coupled with the professional competition between nursery school teachers and day care assistants, the day nursery seemed destined to go the way of earlier child care arrangements like asylums. But the Great Depression would cause policy makers to take a second, albeit biased, look at the day nursery as they implemented New Deal programs.

Professional authority greatly influenced the direction that public child care programs took during this period and into the 1940s. Early childhood educators convinced policy makers that the nursery school successfully proved its value in nurturing young children and would be the perfect site for an experiment in public child care. Mistrusting the expertise of custodial care providers, the federal government bypassed the day nursery and turned to the nursery school when it established its relief program. In making this decision, public policy makers automatically gained a host of college-educated, politically savvy, and tenacious professionals who fought to prove their experiment worthy of federal participation.

The WPA Nurseries served as the protocol for federal child care implemented during World War II under the 1941 Lanham Act. Enacted by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as an emergency measure, the Lanham Act freed emergency construction funds from the Federal Works Administration in order to build child care centers. Only children whose mothers worked in factories with government contracts qualified for admission at the Lanham centers.[112] Consequently, many facilities, such as private day nurseries, did

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[112] Kessler Harris, *Out to Work*, 294.

not receive the benefits of Lanham Act funds since they did not serve a population attached to government-contracted jobs.

The image of Rosie the Riveter has symbolized the awakening of many concerns for working-class women in America, and the implementation of government-supported child care became one of Rosie's key triumphs.[113] But while the Lanham Act has been viewed by some policy analysts as a model to build a national child care agenda, it fell far short of providing care to the variety of children who needed it, and was discontinued when U.S. troops returned to claim their jobs in the country's factories.[114] As political scientist Abbie Gordon Klein has argued:

> The withdrawal of Lanham funds after World War II was the first of two policy decisions that failed to foresee the need for a national base for the development of a system of child care services throughout the country. The second opportunity appeared in 1971 during the onset of the woman's movement.[115]

Nonetheless, Latham Act funds offered a base in which future programming could have been fashioned and ultimately expanded into a comprehensive model. The real culprit in the withdrawal of government support remained the ideological foundation which had for centuries defined child care as a parent's responsibility.

* * * *

Since the colonial period, the meanings of child care changed along with the parental responsibility for that care. As child welfare activists initiated social reforms that focused on securing safer environments for America's children, their concerns centered on the parenting abilities of mothers, judging many women who used day nurseries unfit to

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[113] Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

[114] For a flavor of how the real Rosie the Riveter lived, see Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987); and Richard Santillán, "Rosita the Riveter: Midwest Mexican American Women During World War II, 1941-1945," in *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* 2 (1989): 115-48.

[115] Gordon Klein, *Debate Over Child Care*, 30.

mother. In particular, the race, class and ethnicity of a family figured prominently into reformers' judgments regarding healthy settings for children.[116] By defining "family" in white, middle-class terms (which by privileging the nuclear model rejects communal, extended relationships) advocates discounted the efectiveness of non-familial care, especially for infants. Thus, by the 1920s when the scientific study of the child had achieved legitimacy, women understood wage-earning as a detriment to mothering. Yet, the need for wages and thus for non-familial child care persisted.

The introduction of public programs created perhaps the most dramatic change in organized care. From Mothers' Pensions to Emergency Nursery Schools, the state played an increasingly greater role in the lives of many working-class families. Some came to depend year-round on that aid, while others used it only briefly and may not have even considered it relief. Yet the Great Depression caused reformers and educators to rethink their strategies and assumptions about healthy environments for children, as thousands of Americans simply could no longer properly care for their children without some kind of assistance from outside the family. At that point, the state became ingrained in the family in ways that have not been reversed. In a sense, the state stepped in to parent those children who advocates decided lacked a proper provider, thus making these children dependent on the state.

The following chapters explore the ways in which the residents of Detroit and San Diego handled these changes. Civic leaders — male and female — determined program development by using social welfare rather than workplace benefit models, but not before incidences of death, desertion, and disease among working mothers called reformers to action. In comparison to reformers in Chicago, Philadelphia and New York, advocates in Detroit and San Diego achieved greater success in their attempts to provide child care.

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[116] Work that specifically addresses race, class and ethnicity includes Eileen Boris, "The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the 'Political'," in *Mothers of a New World*; Frankel and Dye, eds. *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era*; and Schackel, *Social Housekeepers: Women Shaping Public Policy in New Mexico, 1920-1940.*

Removed from the hubs of social welfare policy making, reformers could dabble with creating innovative and flexible programs that addressed the specific needs of their constituents. For instance, in Detroit the establishment of the Kindergarten Movement and the presence of the Merrill Palmer School, dedicated to training early childhood educators, influenced the development of nursery schools integrated into the public elementary schools. San Diegans provided infant care for World War II defense workers by creating a network of private boarding homes. In both cases, collaboration between the public and private sectors allowed for child care solutions tailored to the needs of workers in each city.

Chapter 2

MAINTAINING "INDEPENDENT" MOTHERS IN DETROIT: NURSERIES, PENSIONS, AND EMERGENCY SCHOOLS

"A fee of five cents charged to any poor mother who wanted to leave her child at the nursery while she went to work that she might feel independent and avoid the stigma of receiving charitable aid."

— Franklin Street Settlement Day Nursery policy, 1883[1]

The way in which urbanization and industrialization progressed in Detroit — and the workers attracted by those processes — played a critical role in the kinds of child care solutions advocates devised to help working-class parents. Day nurseries, boarding homes, and public institutions began appearing on the Detroit landscape in 1881. Many day nurseries were located in settlement houses designed to guide the immigrant worker into American ideals; thus, in Detroit the provision of many child care programs became closely linked with Americanization efforts.[2] Intellectual movements — specifically, Kindergartens and Child Study — also found a receptive environment in Detroit, and advocates began integrating educational concepts used in these advancements into custodial care programs. Soon free kindergartens became a way to both secure safe environments and introduce immigrant children to American philosophies.

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[1] "The Story of Franklin Settlement," no date, no author, Box 37, folder 15 (Franklin Settlement; Correspondence & Reports, 1932-34), United Community Services Collection [hereafter UCS] in the Reuther.

[2] While the existence of records for these facilities differs widely, I have been able to piece together information from sources located in the Social Welfare History Archives at the Clark Library, University of Minnesota; the Burton Collection at the Detroit Public Library; and the United Community Services Collection at the Reuther. My project does not involve entering the debate surrounding the definition of a settlement house. Instead, I am interested in settlements to the extent that they provided day care for the children of Detroit workers; consequently, I use the term "settlement house" whenever the primary document source refers to a program in that way.

Along with day nurseries and kindergartens, Mothers' Pensions provided another important resource for Detroit women with young children. Only women who had lost the support of a husband could receive a Mothers' Pension, rendering those single mothers dependent on the state for their survival. Eligibility criteria stipulated that mothers give up waged labor to care for their children in their homes. This mandate should have eliminated the need for day nurseries. However, the expansion of day nurseries in Detroit, especially after 1915, indicates that a great many mothers depended on non-familial resources for day care, and that public programs such as Mothers' Pensions simply were not enough to handle the demand and need for child care.

Settlement house residents worked to educate immigrant parents on American standards of parenting through programs such as Mothers' Clubs and Nurse Maids Clubs, products of an evolving child study effort. These clubs promoted the advantages of good maternal hygiene and infant nutrition, which fit into the growing awareness among professionals that intervention into family life proved beneficial to most working-class children.[3]

Child study flourished, however, among middle- and upper-class women, with college-educated mothers taking a particular interest in the field. That interest helped the city attract the attention of child study enthusiasts who, with the help of a dedicated philanthropist, Lizzie Merrill Palmer, opened the Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training in 1920. The School developed into a world renowned site for early childhood education, training hundreds of college women in the field prior to World War II. The Merrill-Palmer School community offered its expertise to local causes, and led the effort to establish federal programs such as the WPA emergency nursery schools. Their focus on parental education as the key to raising healthy children created another resource in which families from all walks of life could learn more about the needs of children. The

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[3] Joan Gittens, *Poor Relations: The Children of the State in Illinois, 1881-1990* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 4.

influx of professional authority in the 1920s would then guide child care initiatives into the World War II era.

Yet, educating parents often created uneven responses. While experts chastised middle-class mothers for spending *too much* time with their children, they criticized working-class mothers for spending *too little* time with their children. Those conflicting exchanges offered some of the first signs that interactions between parents and professionals would not be easy, and it is those uneven developments that are the focus of this chapter.

Theoretical Evaluations of Detroit Urbanization

People attracted to Detroit for job opportunity starting in the late nineteenth century helped mold it into a modern metropolis. By 1910, automobile manufacturing took over the city; in just ten years, work performed in Detroit would help make Michigan the center of the auto industry.[4] Even though by 1920 Detroit developed into the fourth largest city in the country, urban historians paid little attention to the city until historian Olivier Zunz presented his study of urban space. In *The Changing Face of Inequality*, Zunz observed that when Detroit was analyzed it had, "more often been defined by what it was not than by what, in fact, it was." He noted that "the midwestern industrial metropolis in its infancy, with its peculiar combination of smallness, open space, and multiethnic population, is almost terra incognito."[5] Zunz focused on the sites of production — both residential and occupational — to explain how "ethnic clustering" sparked the expansion of neighborhoods in center city and established suburban boundaries.

In documenting the characteristics of ethnic versus occupational clustering in Detroit, Zunz concluded that ethnicity rather than class determined settlement trends prior

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[4] Joe T. Darden, Richard Child Hill, June Thomas, and Richard Thomas, *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 13.

[5] Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, 41.

to the intense migrations of workers into the city beginning in 1910.[6] Between 1910 and 1920, 528,000 people moved to Detroit; American migrants totaled 412,000 or 78 percent of these newcomers.[7] By the 1920s, class influenced residential guidelines when the auto industry began moving middle-class families from center city to the suburbs, leaving working-class families isolated within their ethnic and racial enclaves.[8]

Religion also dictated settlement patterns. For instance, German Protestants, Jews, and Catholics seldom mingled in the same neighborhood. Hence, by the turn of the century, pockets of immigrant neighborhoods dedicated to a single ethnoreligious group developed all over the city. Irish Catholics settled on the West side, German Protestants in center city, and Jewish immigrants of both German and Russian origin joined Polish Catholics on the east side. This religious distinction became blurred by 1920, as Mexican

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[6] Between 1880 and 1940, Detroit claimed a native white population of 60,900, exceeded only by Germans and German Americans who, in 1900, formed the largest ethnic group in Detroit with a population of 69,340 people. Polish and Polish Americans followed second with nearly 25,000 people; Canadians (including English, French and Canadian Americans) totaled 18,450; Irish and Irish Americans numbered 14,880; British and British Americans represented 13,235 persons; Russians and Russian Americans totaled 2,790; Belgian, Dutch, and Luxembourgers numbered 1,640; and there were 1,190 persons of Austro-Hungarian heritage. Ethnic groups under 1,000 persons included Italians, Swiss, Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes. Compared to what they would grow into by the 1920s, African American and Mexican American groups were small in 1900. Zunz reports 2,600 African Americans, and virtually no Mexican Americans at this time. Figures taken from Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, Table 5.3: Ethnic Groups, Detroit, 1900, on page 104. Numbers rounded to nearest tenth. No figures for Native Americans appear in this table.

[7] Sidney Bolkosky analyzed how Jewish immigrants affected these changes in *Harmony and Dissonance*. On the migrations of Mexican Americans into Detroit see Juan R. Garcia, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Valdés, *El Pueblo Mexicano en Detroit y Michigan*; and Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Research on African American migration includes Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915-1945," and "Black Women in the Middle West: The Michigan Experience," in *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History* (Brooklyn: Carleton Publishing, 1994); Richard W. Thomas, "The Black Urban Experience in Detroit: 1916-1967," in Homer C. Hawkins and Thomas, eds. *Blacks and Chicanos in Urban Michigan* (Lansing: Michigan History Division, Department of State, 1979); and *Life for Us Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992). The northern migration of white, native-born families displaced from tenant farming in the South is analyzed in John W. Carey, "A History of the Brightmoor Community Center," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1941).

[8] For thorough analyses on the development of these racial and ethnic enclaves see Marietta Lynn Baba and Malvina Hank Abonyi, *Mexicans of Detroit* (Detroit: Center for Urban Studies, Wayne State University, 1979); Richard Jules Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Thomas, *Life For Us Is What We Make It*; Valdés, *El Pueblo Mexicano en Detroit y Michigan*; Vargas, *Proletarians of the North*; and Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality*.

immigrants of both Catholic and Protestant faiths replaced the Irish Catholics on the West side in the neighborhood called "Corktown." Racial segregation left African American neighborhoods racially distinct, but blended by middle- and working-class families.

Zunz's analysis is the foundation for understanding three broad issues in this chapter. First, what was the general place of female workers in comparison to male workers in Detroit? Labor and social historians have devoted attention to Detroit as a center of ever-changing work culture, particularly as defined by the growing automobile industry; those studies, however, seldom explore the world that a woman worker experienced in Detroit.[9] Her story takes us into the reality of child care in ways that the story of the male worker never could, allowing a new vision of Detroit's working-class to emerge. Thus, this chapter spends time capturing the struggles, frustrations, and relief experienced by female workers who found child care outside their families.

Secondly, how did the unique geography of Detroit as a city affect the delivery of child care; that is, how did the practice of bringing the factory to the worker direct the kind of care available to some children? Tracing the establishment of settlement houses proved key to understanding this issue because these facilities provided most of the organized care to Detroit parents. Between 1880 and 1915, Detroit-area working families had access to day nurseries at about six settlement houses; another nine day nurseries developed throughout the city by 1925.[10] Nurseries cared for an average of twenty children with staff responding to the changing needs of working parents by expanding their operational hours

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[9] In addition to Zunz, important exceptions include Patricia Cooper's work on Polish women workers in the cigar industry and Bogart Leashore's study of African American domestic workers. See Cooper, *Once a Cigarmaker*, specifically Chapter 7 "Five Cents or Less: Cigar Manufacturing in Detroit, Michigan, and Southeastern Pennsylvania," 189-217; and Bogart R. Leashore, "Black Female Workers: Live-In Domestics in Detroit, Michigan, 1860-1880," *Phylon* June 1984: 111-20.

[10] Numbers culled from documents in Franklin-Wright Manuscript Collection [hereafter FW] in the Burton Collection, Detroit Public Library [hereafter Burton], Box 1, folder 3 (History 1884-1945), file - October 1931. While their numbers differ from mine and from each other, Judith Ann Trolanger and Janet Langlois provide introductory information on programming at Detroit settlement houses. See Trolanger, *Settlement Houses and the Great Depression*, 161-162; and Langlois, *Serving Children Then and Now: An Oral History of Early Childhood Education and Day Care in Metropolitan Detroit* (Detroit: Center for Urban Studies, College of Urban, Labor and Metropolitan Affairs, Wayne State University, 1989), 7.

to include Saturdays while keeping fees as low as possible. Most of these programs evolved out of conscious efforts by benevolent groups to serve a particular ethnoreligious or racial community; hence, while retaining a segregated environment, the services offered at these sites often took on missions to Americanize and assimilate families into Anglo-American culture.

The ways in which these factors directed care options is the third issue analyzed in this chapter; how did public and private resources collaborate or clash when providing child care to Detroit workers? In most cases, public and private concerns worked together prior to the Great Depression, but the availability of federal funding began to change these mostly cooperative efforts. The distribution of Lanham Act funds in the 1940s created tension between providers of child care, throwing some of Detroit's private agencies into a frenzy over funding.

In answering these questions, I recognize the points at which these issues intersect and define one another, denying the positions of some historians who argue that labor history and women's history remain "separate tribes."[11] I also acknowledge that religion played a critical role in the formation of urban Detroit but that it remains an understudied component of the urbanization process.[12] Working families did not compartmentalize their lives into work, women, or religion; nor should the historian when studying these families.

Beyond the White Male Autoworker

By 1880, Detroit began to experience extreme social, political, demographic and technological changes, creating an environment in which industrial elites could build a manufacturing metropolis. Growth industries like pharmaceuticals and agricultural science developed in the late nineteenth century; their presence attracted a steady influx of wage-

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[11] Richard Oestreicher, "Separate Tribes? Working-Class and Women's History," *Reviews in American History* 1991: 228-231. The essays in Ava Baron's *Work Engendered* speak to the importance of integrating women workers into labor history.

[12] Exceptions include Bolkosky, *Harmony and Dissonance*; and Leslie Tentler, *Seasons of Grace: A History of the Arch Diocese of Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1990).

earners to the city into the twentieth century. Contrary to most large American cities during this time, working-class families lived in close proximity to middle-class owners of markets, laundries, and small factories. Joining the industrial boom experienced by neighboring manufacturing centers like Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Chicago, Detroit's population of industrial workers tripled between 1870 and 1900. According to Zunz, a variety of ethnic and class groups made the city a "heterogeneous" site which "transformed this simple semiempty midwestern city into the maze of small neighborhoods . . . [that] represented pervasive ethnic and class differentials."[13]

Many workers lived in single-family dwellings with access to sewage and utility lines that offered protection from the rampant spread of air-borne disease found in big city tenement houses. Men labored in lumber mills, machine shops, foundries, print shops, and chemical processing factories; women stripped tobacco, packed seeds, and rolled candy in factories that supported the growing consumer culture. Labor historian Richard Oestreicher analyzed Detroit workers in the late-nineteenth century, and found that by 1890, 72.9 percent or 53,191 of Detroit's wage-earners could be classified as working class.[14] White-collar workers accounted for 14.8 percent or 10,783 persons, business people and entrepreneurs totaled 9.5 percent or 6,930 persons, and professionals numbered only 2.8 percent or 2,055 persons. In comparison to the total population, 12.5 percent of Detroit residents were classified as industrial workers in 1880. That number increased to only 15.9 percent of the total population in 1900, showing that the total population increased along with the working-class segment (see Table 1).[15]

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[13] Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, 86.

[14] Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, 7.

[15] Table adapted from Richard Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, 3-4, 6, who used the Twelfth Census, 1900, Vol. 1, xix and Vol. 8, 994. Percentage of workers to total population were calculated by this author and not part of Oestreicher's original table.

Table 1: Growth of Detroit Population and Industrial Work Force, 1880-1900

Year	Population	Industrial Workers	% workers
1880	116,340	14,500 (est.)	12.5
1890	205,876	34,535	16.7
1900	285,704	45,707	15.9

Source: Richard Jules Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900,* 3-4, 6.

Detroit workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries usually have been defined as male heads-of-households connected to the automobile industry. Consequently, the supports offered to and/or fought for by the Detroit worker have been analyzed from the perspective that situates wage-earners within the family wage ideology.[16] Contrary to that analysis, historian Patricia Cooper found that tobacco factories — the fourth largest industry in Detroit by 1910 — became a leading employer of female workers in Detroit. A failed strike launched in opposition to female labor in 1896, as well as a steady increase in Polish immigration, boosted female employment in the tobacco factories to nearly 10,000 women by 1915.[17] An 1891 Bureau of Labor study listed tobacco factories as the source of employment for 25 percent of Detroit's working women, with an additional forty-one different industries employing women in that year.[18]

Employers saw a ready, willing, and pliable source of labor in hiring women. Unconcerned with their workers' domestic responsibilities, employers like Lillie's Cigar Company, Parke, Davis & Co. pharmaceuticals, and the Ferry Seed Company believed that their employees should feel fortunate to have a job. An open-shop environment gave no power to labor organizations, so unlike cities in which labor took care of their members

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[16] For analysis that challenges the exclusivity of male workers and recognizes the importance of the female worker/wife/mother to secure a family wage see Martha May, "Bread Before Roses: American Workingmen, Labor Unions and the Family Wage," in *Women, Work and Protest,* Ruth Milkman, ed. (Boston: Routledge, 1985): 1-21; and May, "The Historical Problem of the Family Wage," 399-424.

[17] Cooper, *Once a Cigarmaker,* 190.

[18] Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality,* 229.

(at least their male members), Detroit workers needed to look elsewhere for support. Zunz argues that much of the working-class found that help through ethnic and religious organizations.[19] For the most part, benevolent associations and not employers stepped in to assist workers to manage the dual responsibilities of home and work. An important area of assistance was the establishment of day nurseries in working-class neighborhoods. By using a broader definition of worker, we can understand why the development of organized child care was a critical need among Detroit wage-earners in the late nineteenth century.

For instance, by 1890 nearly half of Detroit's working-class families survived through a combination of income from the father, mother, and children.[20] Many children under the age of fourteen years (the age at which children could legally work if they had attended a qualified school for at least four months of the preceding year) labored in Detroit factories. Investigators for the *Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics* found children ages seven to fourteen in sixty-nine different types of factories during 1886. Boys earned an average daily pay of 29 cents and girls averaged 24 cents for a ten-hour workday.[21] Factories that hired children included manufacturers of tobacco, wool, stove works, furniture, and dry goods.

With the exception of research by Patricia Cooper, Bogart Leashore, and Olivier Zunz, historians have either ignored or under-estimated the contributions of Detroit's early female workforce to the family economy. For example, according to Richard Oestreicher, women accepted prescriptive mandates that sent them back to their homes when they married or had children, arguing that as "pin money," their low wages were not missed. He reasoned that average factory wages for women fell far below the average of male employees, therefore, through "careful management" a married woman could sufficiently stretch the family's budget and perform outwork to supplement their income.[22]

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[19] Ibid., 227.

[20] Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, 8-9.

[21] Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, 229 and 233.

[22] Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, 10.

To be sure, in 1890, few married women worked for wages in Detroit. According to the Michigan Bureau of Labor, only 2.3 percent of married women in Detroit worked for wages in 1890, and those numbers increased only slightly to 2.8 percent by 1900.[23] But the percentage of Detroit women sixteen years of age and over engaged in gainful occupations for the years 1900, 1910, and 1920 refutes some of Oestreicher's generalized assumptions regarding women's waged work. Not including women employed by outwork, 25.4 percent in 1900, 29.1 percent in 1910, and 26.4 percent of Detroit women, sixteen years of age and older, worked in wage-earning occupations.[24] Moreover, many married women earned wages through an informal economy that included street vending, taking in boarders, and even sexual service. Indeed, not all mothers enjoyed the security of an employed male head-of-household. Women workers represented nearly one in four wage-earners, with most of this group falling between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five years. They most often stripped tobacco, pieced together clothing and helped process chemicals.

Tables 2 and 3 show women workers in Detroit as well as the gradual entry of married women into the workforce in Detroit as compared to the number of women workers in Detroit. By 1920, the U.S. census reported that 82,843 women earned wages in Detroit. Following national trends, clerical jobs employed the greatest percentage of women with 30.5 percent. Domestic/personal service and manufacturing jobs employed 22.9 and 22 percent of Detroit's female workers, respectively.

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[23] Joseph A. Hill, *Census Monographs IX: Women in Gainful Occupations, 1870 to 1920* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1929), 250; and Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, 233. The Detroit average was always lower than the national average. Figures are unavailable for 1890, but in 1900, 5.6 percent of female workers were married.

[24] Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations*, 31.

Table 2: Women Employed in Detroit, 1920, By Six Largest Occupational Groups

Occupation	Number Workers	Percent workers (a)
Domestic & Personal Service	18,973	22.9
Clerical	25,308	30.5
Manuf. & Mechanical Industries	18,298	22.0
Trade	8,739	10.5
Professional Service	8,124	9.8
Public Service	87	0.1

(a) based on total of 82,843 workers

Source: Adapted from Joseph A. Hill, "Table 117: Women Employed in Certain Selected Occupations, for Cities of 100,000 Inhabitants or More: 1920," *Women in Gainful Occupations 1870 to 1920 Census Monographs 9* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1929), 208, 210.

Table 3: Women Sixteen Years and Over in Gainful Occupations in Detroit 1920, 1910, and 1900

Female Workers					Married Female Workers				
Total # Employed					Total # Employed				
	Number	Percent				Number	Percent		
	1920	1920	1910	1900		1920	1920	1910	1900
314,078	82,843	26.4	29.1	25.4	209,193	17,105	8.2	6.6	2.8

Source: Joseph A. Hill, "Table 156: Percentage of Women Engaged in Gainful Occupations, Classified by Marital Condition, for Cities of 100,000 Inhabitants or More: 1920, 1910, and 1900," in *Census Monographs, IX: Women in Gainful Occupations, 1870- 1920* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1929), 269.

Table 4 illustrates how occupational segregation kept women contained in jobs that paid less than their male relatives. Whereas a man twenty-one to forty-years-old seldom earned less than $288 a year, women in the same age category rarely earned that much.[25]

Table 4: Women's Annual Income in Selected Detroit Occupations by Industry, 1892

Industry	Most Frequent Occupation		Highest-paid Occupation		Lowest-paid Occupation	
Tobacco	Stripper	$117	Hand worker	$648	Box packer	$101
Clothing	Parts maker	198	Cap cutter	410	Thread trimmer	75
Chemical	Laboratory	228	Stenographer	494	Table worker	125
Boot & shoe	Shoe fitter	250	Operator	227	Press feeder	104
Laundry	Ironer	215	Washer	235	Roller	73
Capsule	Capsule maker	207	Forelady	394	Capsule joiner	166

Source: Michigan State Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics* (Lansing, 1892), 139-181 and published as Table 9.5 in Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, 232.

Using a young female workforce appealed to employers who became increasingly concerned with labor unrest in the economic crisis years of the 1890s.[26] Tables 5 and 6 detail the ages of women working in Detroit in 1892, and the age at which those workers entered the workforce.

Table 5: Age of Women Workers in Detroit, 1892

Age	Number	Percent
Under 16	481	8.0
16—20	3,285	54.6
21—25	1,508	25.0
26—30	508	8.4
31—35	113	1.9
Over 35	126	2.1

Source: Michigan State Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics* (Lansing, 1892), 139. Adapted from Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, 10.

[25] Ibid., 230-232.

[26] Patricia Cooper explains this process for Detroit in *Once a Cigar Maker*, 189-190.

Employers believed they could hold wages at a minimum level if they employed young girls and women rather than paying male employees a family wage. In 1890s Detroit, the majority of female workers entered the workforce between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, but a healthy 88 percent of female workers or 5,301 women fell between the ages of sixteen and thirty — years typically reserved for childbearing and childrearing.

Table 6: Detroit Women Wage Workers, 1892, Age Entered Workforce

Age	Number	Percent
10 or less	34	0.6
11—13	850	15.3
14—16	3,776	67.8
17—19	722	13.0
20—25	152	2.7
Over 25	37	0.7

Source: Michigan State Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics* (Lansing, 1892), 144. Adapted from Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, 9.

In the case of tobacco workers (a group comprised mostly of Polish immigrants), Cooper found that while less than one percent of female cigar factory workers were married in 1900, that figure changed to 22.4 percent by 1920. In those same twenty years, the average age of female tobacco workers twenty-five-years or younger dropped from 92.8 to 64.2 percent.[27] Cooper argued that Polish families pooled family incomes, often using the earnings of their unmarried daughters to help toward the purchase of a home; however, Cooper also documented the change in that phenomenon, reporting that during the early twentieth century, "married women moved into cigar making, and single women stayed in the trade after they wed."[28] This shows that by 1920 more women (at least in tobacco factories) were probably in need of family care resources, a probability that is

[27] Ibid., 194.

[28] Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker*, 194.

supported by the establishment and expansion of day nurseries in neighborhoods dominated by tobacco workers, such as Tau Beta House in Hamtramck.

Reports from relief organizations and city agencies (rather than just federal and state census reports), support Cooper's findings in acknowledging wage-earning by women in Detroit, further negating Oestreicher's assumptions regarding women workers. For instance, as early as 1881, concerned citizens formed programs such as the Detroit Day Nursery and Kindergarten Association to help women forced to enter the workforce. The East Side Settlement House reported in 1909 that their facility, located in the heart of the Polish district, served the "crowds of unskilled laborers working in the shops and factories, especially the cigar factories; several of which in the immediate vicinity employ hundreds of girls and women."[29] That same year, the settlement established the Sophie B. Wright Day Nursery to care for children under five years of age. Within three months of its opening, twenty children regularly attended the nursery. Open Monday through Friday, parents paid five cents per day per child for day care. By 1916, the nursery added an Employment Bureau to its services, reporting that it connected an average of twenty-five mothers each month to day work — "chiefly cleaning and laundry" — in homes throughout the city.[30]

In its Twenty-first Annual Statement in 1914, the Detroit YWCA reported that 25,000 "young" women were employed in Detroit manufactories, and that its Employment Bureau received 17,020 applications for help, filling 10,051 positions.[31] Certainly not all of these women had children nor needed the use of a day nursery, but the steady growth of day care services throughout the city demonstrates that many families depended on organizations to provide them with day care.

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[29] "East Side Settlement House: A Neighborhood Center, 1909," in FW, Box 1, folder 3 (History 1884-1945).

[30] *The Sophie B. Wright Day Nursery and Kindergarten, 1916* in FW, Box 1, folder 3 (History 1884-1945).

[31] "Detroit YWCA Annual Statement, 1914," pp. 17-20 in UCS, Box 68, file 17.

A woman's age, race and ethnicity generally dictated her job opportunities. Only white, native-born and immigrant women could work in Detroit's factories. White women usually found employment in "cleaner" industries like the pharmaceutical manufacturer, Parke, Davis & Co., where in 1896 a reported five hundred women worked in the laboratory joining and filling capsules.[32] Tobacco gave immigrant women jobs, but factory work remained off-limits to African American women until after World War I. Whereas Polish women stripped tobacco for cigars, domestic service in white households provided the main source of income for African American women living in Detroit from the late nineteenth century until World War I.[33] African American males also performed domestic service, although unlike women, they could also find manual labor jobs such as street cleaning.

Most Detroit live-in domestics were fifteen - to nineteen-years-old, with the majority of workers under the age of twenty-five. In documenting the labor of African American women, historian Jacqueline Jones found that African American women involved in this early period of Northern migration (1870 - 1910) tended to be young, single, separated, or widowed.[34] The Detroit demographics support these findings. In his analysis of African American female domestics in Detroit from the 1880 census, Bogart R. Leashore found that 78 percent of these women were single. Married and widowed women represented 10 and 9 percent respectively; 3 percent reported no marital status; and no women identified themselves as divorced.[35]

According to a national domestic employer survey taken in the early 1900s, those agents hiring in Detroit preferred to place these presumably unattached women in white homes. In fact, agents used a woman's marital status to keep her from securing a domestic position, complaining that family responsibilities frequently made married women

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[32] Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, photo caption center spread.
[33] Leashore, "Black Female Workers," 114.
[34] Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 155-56.
[35] Ibid., 116.

physically and mentally exhausted. Agents also charged that married domestics took employers' food to help feed their own families.[36] Thus, motherhood remained the greatest deterrent to employing African American women in white homes because they prevented her from "living in" at her employer's home. Moreover, day nurseries in Detroit did not accept African American children until the 1920s — after the Detroit Urban League was established and some progress made toward racial integration.[37] Consequently, many mothers left their children in the South where relatives could care for them.[38] Clearly, the existence of children caused a barrier for African American women trying to secure employment in one of the few occupations open to them in the North.

Considering these statistics about women workers, Richard Oestreicher's arguments regarding the position of female wage-earners in Detroit are worth closer examination because they exemplify the ways in which long-held assumptions of who works and why become the tenets that create policy. First, Oestreicher assumed that all married women had husbands that could and did support the family; but case files of the Detroit Association of Charities (DAC) reveal that 121 female heads of households asked the organization for assistance in 1891.[39] As the population increased, so did the support needed by women heading their households. Consider the annual DAC service report figures for October 1, 1912 to October 1, 1913: 327 widows, 130 deserted wives, 77 separated wives, 31 divorced wives, and 36 unmarried mothers had received some form of aid from their agency.[40] Those six hundred women represent an increase of five-fold in twenty years of the number of women requesting and receiving aid. Part of that increase lies in the change that more aid became available, such as when Michigan began distributing Mothers' Pensions in 1913. Furthermore, a philosophical change in the

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[36] Leashore, "Black Female Workers," 118.

[37] Joseph A. Beattie, *The Franklin Scene: An Informal History of Detroit's Oldest Social Settlement* (Detroit, 1948), 17.

[38] Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 160.

[39] Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, 276.

[40] "Statistical Report October 1, 1912 to October 1, 1913," UCS, Box 5, folder 13 (Service Reports 1912-16).

Progressive Era encouraged women to seek out financial assistance in order to stay in their homes rather than leave them to earn wages. Nevertheless, the numbers indicate a great many female-headed households in Detroit.

Secondly, Oestreicher understood that a female worker would quit her job out of a consciousness that, as part of a married couple, she no longer needed to contribute wages to the family economy. Again, we can turn to the work of the DAC for proof that married women with children needed to continue working outside the home. During research for a report on the availability of day work, investigators found that "day work [laundresses, cleaning, general housework] is the principal occupational field of an increasing number of wives of wage-earning husbands, and women with dependent families."[41] In gathering their information, the Bureau drew from two sources: private, philanthropically-organized agencies; and commercial enterprises that demanded a higher fee for finding women work but paid workers a higher wage. Agencies cited in the report included the Young Women's Christian Association, Franklin Street Settlement, Sophie B. Wright Day Nursery, the Michigan Free Employment Bureau, Neighborhood House, Florence Crittenden Day Nursery, Volunteers of America, Salvation Army, Mrs. Watt's Employment Agency and Miss Taylor's Employment Agency.

The report explained the situation of Mary C., a mother who had enlisted the help of her father and mother to help with tending the children:

> Mary C. is the mother of five small children 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 years old. Her husband has syphilis and tuberculosis and for six years has been very irregularly employed as a meter reader. There has been very little income during this time, and living conditions have been so bad that the children have been very neglected. One child is cared for by Mary's father, who is a minister, and another is with the father's sister a large part of the time. The mother has tried to work and place the children in day nurseries, but has twice been so discouraged, that she has asked to have them put in boarding homes. Efforts are being made to keep the family together and if the proper sort of day employment can be secured for the mother, with supplementary

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[41] The Associated Charities Research Bureau, "Districting Detroit: For the Use of Employment Sub-stations Furnishing Day-Work — Preliminary Report," 18 April 1917, UCS, Box 5, folder 11 (Research Bureau, 1917-18).

relief from public or private sources and necessary medical care for the father and children, this family will cease troubling the social agencies.[42]

In order to keep her family intact she needed to secure day work in addition to any public or private funds she was eligible to receive. Unfortunately, the report gives no indication of the family's race or ethnicity which, by 1917, could have included a variety of people: northern, eastern or southern European immigrants; African American, Canadian, Anglo, and Mexican families migrating into Detroit to find work; and second generation Detroiters. DAC investigators usually distinguished non- native-born white families by indicating a race or ethnicity, i.e. "Colored" or "Bohemian," so we can probably assume that this woman was a native-born white woman with ties to Detroit. That status would have paved her way for easier access and entry into factory or day labor work.

Thirdly, Oestreicher concluded that a woman worker *willingly* left her place of employment when she became married or pregnant; actually, the passage of protective labor legislation *forced* many pregnant women to leave the workforce. Employers generally ignored working conditions until the passage of protective labor legislation during the Progressive Era.[43] Prior to the landmark legislation, *Muller v. Oregon* (1908), women worked longer hours during the day, labored at night, and could keep their jobs through a pregnancy.[44] While these situations did not represent the ideal, women at least had the opportunity to earn wages while pregnant. Oestreicher overlooked the striking numbers outlined in Table 6 that women workers over twenty-one years — an age that typically represents women married and/or with children — totaled 37.4 percent. If one includes the age group sixteen to twenty years, the total skyrockets to 92 percent.

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[42] Ibid., 8.

[43] On pages 180-213 of *Out to Work*, Alice Kessler-Harris provides a good account of the struggles to enact protective labor legislation. See also Sybil Lipschultz, "Hours and Wages: The Gendering of Labor Standards in America," *Journal of Women's History* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 114-135 for a detailed analysis of these labor laws and their affects on women workers.

[44] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 186-187. After *Muller v. Oregon* and between 1909-1917, nineteen states passed laws restricting hours for female workers.

Late nineteenth-century employers offered their female employees little compassion regarding family issues; rather they concentrated on the accumulation of capital. Few employers compensated their employees directly for sickness or work-related injuries. In *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, Oestreicher pointed out that "not a single one of the 133 employers questioned about employee benefit programs by the State Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1892 reported contributing to employee benefit funds."[45] Employers instead contributed to helping destitute workers indirectly by contributing to the major charity organization for poor relief in the city, the Detroit Associated Charities (DAC). Many of those employers represented the city's major manufacturers and the principle employers of women, such as Theodore Buhl, president of Parke, Davis & Co.; G. H. Barbour, one of the founders of Michigan Stove; and John Gray, president of the candy factory, Gray, Toynton and Fox. James McMillan, chairman of American Car and Foundry, the largest employer in Detroit, sat on the Association's Council.[46] Since Detroit business leaders occupied key positions on DAC's council, they clearly saw their role in providing workers' assistance as indirect and of a charitable nature, but not as a legal obligation as an employer.[47]

Some employers even seemed to believe that their workers should honor old world customs of homage. When a labor newspaper in 1884 charged the foreman at the Ferry Seed Company with forcing his employees to contribute to a Christmas gift for him, two female employees mysteriously lost their jobs shortly after the article appeared.[48] Seventy-two women "signed a declaration under threat of discharge" denying the truthfulness of the article. Given these working conditions, one can easily understand why women workers did not push their employers to implement support programs. Instead, assistance came from private charities or publicly-sponsored relief programs.

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[45] Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, 15.
[46] Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality*, 263-64.
[47] Ibid.; and Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, 15-16.
[48] Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, 19.

Charity Movement Organizations and mutual aid societies assisted many workers in Detroit, but the bulk of relief fell to the city. In fact, Detroit is unique among large cities in which its private and public concerns cooperated in managing relief efforts.[49] The DAC, established in 1879, operated as a central clearinghouse for screening potential clients of private charities, hospitals, and various other denominational agencies devoted to helping the poor. Relief rarely included cash assistance, but rather, consisted of lodging, food, and clothing. The primary goal of the DAC was to gainfully employ those people seeking their assistance. Every client known to the DAC or one of the cooperating charitable agencies had to register with the DAC labor bureau, and they asked Detroit employers to fill their vacancies with DAC registrants. In this way, Zunz explains, the DAC enjoyed the support of the city's "manufacturing elite."[50]

The DAC influenced the way in which public welfare took shape in Detroit during the late nineteenth century. Under pressure from DAC members, the state legislature chartered the Board of Poor Commissioners (BPC) in 1880 as a non-partisan, unpaid, advisory group which managed the investigation and distribution of public relief. Within its first decade of operation, the BPC greatly outpaced the number of cases handled by the DAC. In 1890-91 it distributed aid to 39 percent more cases than the DAC even reviewed; by 1896/97, it handled four times the cases reviewed by the DAC (5,575 families to 1,250 families).[51] Whereas some cities, like New York, waged campaigns against public funding of relief, the Detroit constituency accepted and even promoted continuing the work of the BPC.

This public/private cooperation proved particularly helpful to Detroit workers when, by 1910, tuberculosis threatened the lives of many city dwellers, and forced much of the

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[49] On page 262 of Changing *Face of Inequality*, Zunz explained that, "Rather than seeking the abolition of public support of the poor as its counterparts in other industrial cities had done, the Detroit charity movement cooperated with the city and managed to reorient some of its activities. As a result both private and public efforts shared in the same vision of the poor and worked from the same premises."

[50] Ibid., 265-267.

[51] Ibid., 268.

labor force to use relief. The Detroit Board of Health reported that 436 cases of tuberculosis were charted for the years 1910-1915. Of these, only 22 percent, or 66 men, had been examined by a health provider in the early stages of their disease; while nearly one-third of TB victims received medical treatment only in the last stages of advanced TB. The less skilled the worker, the greater the lack of medical attention. Forty percent of painters, glaziers, and varnishers received care in the last stages, while only 10 percent of the 97 men saw care in the first stages. Of the 517 cases of TB among industrial laborers, only one-fifth (or 97) were tested in the first stage and 47 percent in the last stages.[52]

Concerns over the health of workers influenced the delivery of child care in an indirect fashion as the care of tubercular patients spawned the development of settlement houses in critical areas of the city. The Tau Beta Association, founded by four college women in 1901, brought care to immigrant Polish families afflicted with TB in Hamtramck, a neighborhood directly east of center city.[53] After their initial interest in tuberculosis, the Tau Beta women became interested in Hamtramck as a "field for social work," which followed the trend in the Progressive Era to shift from a particular focus — in this case health care — to a multi-faceted social work environment. By 1916, the Association combined a number of existing services located throughout the neighborhood into the Tau Beta Community House, and the day nursery (established in 1919) evolved into its primary program.

Tau Beta, whose population was primarily Polish, also housed a "model kitchen" where young girls learned domestic science classes and mothers learned how to cook American dishes. The Tau Beta Association boasted that mothers returned to the center at night to learn English so they could learn to read American cookbooks. The same month that saw 600 children pass through the center, witnessed 222 women learning to cook the

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[52] Memo to Industrial Welfare Managers, Board of Commerce, Detroit, Michigan from the Associated Charities of Detroit regarding the Industrial Nursing problem, January 1916, in UCS, Box 5, folder 8 (Associated Charities of Detroit, Correspondence and Reports, 1916-17).

[53] "Tau Beta House Now Debt Free," *The Detroit News*, 4 December 1921, 10. By 1908, the Association prepared meals for tubercular patients and helped raise funds to build the Detroit Tuberculosis Sanitarium which was completed in 1910.

American way.[54] Center staff formed "Mothers' Clubs" for those desiring to learn English and encouraged these women to invite their husbands and friends. On December 4, 1921, a story in *The Detroit News* credited the services of the Tau Beta House day nursery with allowing a widower to retain custody of his four children. The father paid the nursery forty cents a day, believing the rate fair for the care his children received while he worked at a local factory. That same report explained how a mother of five delivered her children to the nursery every morning so that she could earn wages to support her family. The nursery fed the children a hot lunch and dinner, supervised their play, and monitored their health; tasks that allowed this mother to avoid locking her children in the house as some of her fellow employees resorted to before Tau Beta House opened in their neighborhood.[55]

The trend of single parents turning to the Tau Beta day nursery continued into the 1930s. A report issued in 1930 noted high utilization among single parents: of an average thirty-five families using the nursery, nine were widows or widowers; twenty represented deserted or divorced women and men; and one parent was an unmarried mother. Most of these parents worked as domestics or as factory operatives.[56] The social experiment conducted at Tau Beta Community House worked: services shifted away from the focus on tuberculosis to Americanization and community education. As just one of some twenty settlement programs in Detroit, Tau Beta Community House concentrated on helping its Polish neighbors, providing vital assistance to working families.

Day Nurseries and Detroit Parents

Settlement house workers organized their agendas around their clients, thus the religion, ethnicity, and race of those clients defined the scope of care offered in various neighborhoods. Religious organizations in Detroit were the first to recognize that working-class families needed help with caring for their children. The Ladies Industrial School

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] UCS, Box 58, folder 19 (Tau Beta Committee Correspondence and Reports, 1927-32). Similar statistics are reported for the years 1928 and 1929.

Association formed in 1857 when sixty women from twenty-eight different churches "banded together" to address the problem of waifs abandoned or orphaned during the Civil War.[57] They attended to the basic needs of food and shelter before turning their attention to training the "waifs" in a skill or trade. According to recorders of the Industrial School's history, it changed its name in 1912 to Neighborhood House, and one year later opened the first settlement house in Detroit. Located on the west side in the heart of "Corktown," Neighborhood House first served Irish immigrants and then Mexicans, Maltese, Chinese and African American families as they moved into the area.

While the Ladies Industrial School Association became the first organized effort directed at the care of children, its historians were mistaken about it being the first social settlement. That distinction belongs to Franklin Street Settlement House, incorporated as a social settlement in 1901, and the first program established in Michigan with the specific agenda to enhance the "social light and progress for the whole community."[58] Before its incorporation as a settlement, Franklin Street had a twenty-year history as a day nursery and free kindergarten for the children of working mothers. This combination of early childhood education and custodial care proved to be the model for other programs that developed in Detroit. As education historian Michael Shapiro explains, free kindergartens became popular modes through which benevolent workers infused an American and middle-class ideal to the immigrant poor living in cities. Children learned how to keep themselves clean and abide rules that dictated orderly play while their mothers learned to nurture them into respectable citizens. As predecessors to the settlement house, free kindergartens and day nurseries became the center of both education and health maintenance for those living in the neighborhood.[59] The formation of free kindergartens in

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[57] Scrapbook text, no author, no date, Box 4 (Scrapbook Pages: Neighborhood House), Detroit Industrial School Collection in Burton.

[58] Beattie, *Franklin Scene*, 11; and "Biography of Margaret Stansbury," UCS, Box 37, Folder 15.

[59] Michael Steven Shapiro, *Child's Garden: The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey* (University Park: The Penn State University Press, 1983), 85.

Detroit followed this general outline, while the presence of a strong German immigrant community only served to strengthen the movement in Detroit.

The Kindergarten Movement migrated with the German émigrés of 1848 who used the day nursery to promote their ideas about education, then spread rapidly through cities with large German immigrant populations, like Detroit.[60] By 1890, Germans and their children comprised 27 percent of Detroit's population which, at that time, represented the city's largest ethnic group. German leaders in Detroit opened some of the earliest American kindergartens which served the dual purposes of educating children and cementing the growing German-American working-class culture.[61]

On December 31, 1879, Detroit hosted a convention of Kindergartners which profoundly influenced a group of "charitably-minded Detroit women." These women set their attentions and energies to the project of caring for the "children of the poor," beginning with working on a two-part agenda that mirrored the philosophies engaged by most late- nineteenth-century urban reformers: to save and to Americanize.[62] The Kindergarten Movement also directly influenced the ways in which Detroit organizations delivered day care to working mothers. In 1883, the Detroit Day Nursery and Kindergarten Association (DNKA) completed a facility to accommodate fifty children, and made provisions for the future care of one hundred children. In 1884, it served 4,900 meals and delivered 1,640 days of child care; within one year, these figures jumped to 8,232 meals served to an average attendance of sixty-five children. The DNKA expanded their work in 1889 when it opened a second day nursery and kindergarten. This newer facility was capable of caring for seventy-five children and operated with an annual budget

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[60] Keith D. Osborn, *Early Childhood Education in Historical Perspective*, second edition (Athens, GA: The Daye Press, Inc. 1992), 53-54. One of these immigrants, Margarethe Schurz, established the first kindergarten in America in 1856 in Wisconsin, and the movement soon spread throughout the Midwest.

[61] Olivier Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 50.

[62] "Story of Franklin Settlement," UCS, Box 37, folder 15; Langlois, *Serving Children Then and Now*, 5; and John F. McClymer, "Gender and the 'American Way of Life': Women in the Americanization Movement," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 9-10 (Spring 1991): 3-20.

of $1,600. Association member, Mrs. George H. Hammond,[63] opened a third day nursery in the late 1880s, using her own financial resources. Its capacity for thirty-five children operated with an annual budget of $1,500.[64] The expansion of day nurseries in Detroit shows that the DNKA observed the need among Detroit workers for day care. By attaching free kindergartens to these nurseries they could reach more members of these working families.

The original work of DNKA women became systematized under the direction of Margaret Stansbury, who came to Detroit in 1897 as resident manager of the Franklin Street Day Nursery and Kindergarten.[65] Stansbury died only ten years later on June 27, 1908, but her years at Franklin Street proved productive for the city and its working-class people. Written accounts of Stansbury indicate that she earned a great love and respect among both the people using Franklin Street programs and those in charge of their direction. She first came to Detroit in 1894 to teach music at the Detroit Conservatory of Music. While in Detroit, she learned of Jane Addams' work in Chicago, and left the Conservatory in 1896 to spend a year training at Hull House.[66] Returning to Detroit, she unleashed her reformist energy by helping to found the Juvenile Court in Michigan and the Detroit Consumers' League. Stansbury was also instrumental in establishing public baths, playgrounds, and evening schools for immigrants. Like many of her Progressive

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[63] Her husband founded Winn and Hammond printing at the age of thirty. In 1900, the company employed 125 people. See Appendix 6 (The Leaders of Detroit's Industrialization) in Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality*, 446-447.

[64] "The Story of Franklin Settlement," 3. The first facility was located at 58 Church Street; the second opened at 443 Franklin Street; and the third day nursery would be opened at 84 Porter Street.

[65] "The Story of Franklin Settlement," 5; and "Biography of Margaret Stansbury." Margaret Stansbury was born June 6, 1866 in Danville, Illinois where she attended the local schools and developed an interest in music.

[66] Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform*, 3-37. Muncy explains on page 14 that in 1896, Hull House Settlement boasted twenty-five permanent residents who were hand-picked by Addams. She writes, "Every woman who wished to reside at Hull House had first to apply for admission, then to submit to a probationary period, and finally to face the decision of current residents as to whether she should receive the privileges of permanent residency. During this process, the community scrutinized novitiates especially for the 'settlement spirit,' which, because it was never defined, gave current residents the power to exclude anyone they did not like. This exclusivity assured the settlement some degree of cohesion and internal peace, as it resulted in the selection of an elite group of highly educated, middle-class women and men."

contemporaries, Stansbury worked for better housing in the city, and for the regulation of saloons and public dance halls.

But Stansbury's greatest devotion lay in promoting the "settlement spirit" that she learned in Chicago, embracing the Franklin Street facility for her settlement mission. In addition to continuing the day nursery and kindergarten, she implemented a typical set of activities found in settlement houses that included language classes for non-English speaking clients, recreation for adolescent boys and girls, laundry and bathing facilities, and a medical clinic. Friend and fellow settlement worker, Florence Hart, wrote, "I cannot say enough for the good work of Miss Stansbury. Her efforts were untiring!" Hart explained that Stansbury's immediate family never approved of the life she had chosen, but that she "carried on nevertheless," with a small monthly salary of $25. Each time the Franklin Street Board of Directors tried to increase Stansbury's salary she declined; however, Stansbury finally consented to a raise when she learned that one of Franklin Street's patrons needed an operation. Years later, the Board learned that Stansbury used her salary to pay for that surgery.[67]

Stansbury's self-sacrifice typified behavior among women active in the newer, female-dominated professions that emerged in the late nineteenth century. As Robyn Muncy argues, "in addition to popularizing scientific knowledge, the emerging female professional ethos valued self-sacrificing service. Whether in male- or female-dominated professions, women could not escape the cultural imperative to submerge their egos in service to others."[68] Moreover, "self-abnegation" assured professional women the patronage of elite women; that, "only by justifying an occupation in terms of service to the dispossessed could professional women solicit such support."[69]

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[67] Letter from Florence Hart, no date in FW, Box 20, folder 6 (Staff-General), file - Reminiscences by Florence Hart.

[68] Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform*, 21-22.

[69] Ibid., 22.

Stansbury turned the day nursery and free kindergarten into a settlement house, devoted to the care and education of poor children. The 1901 incorporation papers filed by the DNKA with the State of Michigan demonstrate their priorities:

> To maintain and support a day nursery, or home, for the care, custody and instruction during the day time, of young children who are poor and deserving, and whose parents, guardians or custodian go out to work; and in connection therewith to maintain and support a school for the elementary instruction of deserving poor children in the rudiments of knowledge and mechanical arts, upon a plan similar to what is known as the Kindergarten system.[70]

By 1905, six residents lived at Franklin Street Settlement and thirty-five non-resident assistants helped with its operation. Each day, nursery matrons registered seventy-five children in the facility which was open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The settlement tried to keep abreast of the particular needs of its neighbors, especially in regards to children and adolescents. For instance, in 1905, residents noted a problem with irregular school attendance, so the settlement brought in a resident who specialized in truancy issues. The 1910-11 Annual Report noted that four paid workers cared for a daily average of fifty children in the day nursery, and its employment bureau located day work for an average of twenty women each day.[71]

When the settlement published its 1912-13 Annual Report, their objectives changed to more closely resemble those of settlements in large cities. The day nursery and kindergarten thereby simply became part of a long list of programs dedicated to "study and serve the needs of the neighborhood." Settlement personnel did, however, continue to recognize working mothers and their children as a priority need among Franklin Street patrons. The report listed as the two "dominating needs" the "care of the babies and little children whose mothers are forced to work during the day," and "the fostering and elevating of the home life and living conditions of families in the community."[72] To meet

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[70] FW, Box 1, folder 1 (By-Laws/Articles of Incorporation), file - Franklin Settlement, circa June 1901.

[71] *1910-11 Franklin Street Settlement Annual Report* in UCS, Box 37, folder 10 (Franklin Settlement; Annual Report, 1910-17, 1935, 1955, 1955).

[72] *1912-13 Franklin Street Settlement Annual Report,* UCS, Box 37, folder 10.

those goals, Franklin Street residents enlisted the help of local social workers and medical personnel. One medical clinic assistant averaged four hundred visits a month to neighborhood homes. The Day Nursery continued to be a popular service. Annual Reports listed total registrations at 3,465 children in 1912-13; 4,147 children in 1915-16; and 4,405 children in 1916-17.[73]

The East Side Settlement House, later known as Sophie B. Wright Settlement, also began providing day care to Detroit parents during this time. Developed in 1909, their day nursery and free kindergarten served children living on the east side of the city in a predominantly Polish district. Open Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., throughout its history the nursery cared for an average of twenty children a day. Not every parent could use the day nursery. East Side residents limited the nursery to those children with ill or deceased fathers, and whose mothers had passed an inspection deeming her as both a good parent and desperate for aid. Their 1911 pamphlet was explicit in this qualification: "No child whose father is able to work is accepted . . . None are received whose mothers are not found, upon investigation, to be absolutely in need of assistance."[74] That investigation often corresponded to findings already made by a Mothers' Pension worker. These multiple "investigations" by social workers, day nursery matrons, and visiting housekeepers subjected working-class families — particularly female-headed families — to a seemingly never-ending parade of experts armed with parental advice. Ultimately, day care became cast as a welfare measure rather than a working woman's right of choice.

East Side Settlement personnel treated their neighborhood a bit differently than other settlements. Instead of concentrating on issues of "extreme poverty" among the Polish in the neighborhood, East Side organizers focused on what they perceived as a greater problem, "ignorance." Settlement literature in 1909 explained that the Polish

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[73] Ibid.; *1915-16 Franklin Street Settlement Annual Report*; and *1916-17 Franklin Street Settlement Annual Report*, all found in UCS, Box 37, folder 10.

[74] *Sophie B. Wright Day Nursery & Kindergarten, 1911* Pamphlet, FW, Box 1, folder 3.

people, "as a race, are thrifty and hard working," therefore, finding a remedy for poverty posed little problem; however, ignorance among the Polish proved trying to those involved with the East Side Settlement. Resident workers and benefactors alike found them ignorant, "not only of all laws of sanitation, of health, and of the care of little children, but also being foreigners, of the language and customs of Americans, and of the civil laws especially those concerning education."[75]

The Polish practice of sending their children to "ill-equipped, over-crowded," parochial schools instead of Detroit public schools posed the greatest concern among the settlement crowd. Their fears reflected the growing anti-immigrant sentiment raging throughout the United States. Because Polish-speaking nuns taught the children in Polish, their hopeful assimilation into American Protestant culture proved particularly challenging to settlement workers. Not only did East Side Settlement workers want their clients to learn English, they felt it critical that Polish children be exposed to the manual training and domestic science courses offered at the public schools. Settlement literature reveals their biases about Polish education and its affect on children:

> On receiving their First Communion, at about twelve, they leave school, and then as they cannot obtain working papers until they are 14, they become either household drudges or spend their time on the streets acquiring the habits which eventually lead to the Juvenile Court.[76]

Their solution to the problem of inadequate education among Polish children became to install a free kindergarten in the settlement, so that Polish children "missing this early educational blessing in a child's life" could at least receive some exposure to a "proper" education.[77] Parochial schools started children in first grade, thus, settlement staff argued, Polish Catholic children received additional rather than different education. In 1915 they changed the name from the innocuous East Side Settlement to the Sophie B. Wright

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[75] *East Side Settlement House: A Neighborhood Center, 1909*, FW, Box 1, folder 3.
[76] Ibid.
[77] UCS, Box 67, folder 4 (Sophie Wright Settlement; Annual Report 1915-16, 1950-51).

Day Nursery and Kindergarten in honor of a pioneer of free education,[78] and employed three child workers: Mrs. Ada Bittenbender, a social worker and kindergarten teacher; Miss Helen Hillman, a nurse; and Miss Margaret Harns, secretary for the Employment Bureau.[79] Each day, about fifteen women found work through the employment bureau. Average attendance increased to twenty-eight children in the Nursery and forty children in the Kindergarten, so by the next year, organizers hired a separate kindergarten teacher, Miss Bertha Carson.

In 1915, settlement staff also formed a Mother's Club and Nurse Maids Club to teach women and girls proper sanitation, nutrition, and safety for infants and young children. Both clubs had underlying agendas. Settlement workers hoped to use the Mother's Club as a tool to "promote the assimilation of American ideals amongst these women who found themselves bewildered in a strange environment."[80] They designed the Nurse Maids Class to keep young girls off the streets by teaching them a skill they could then use to earn money.[81] Political scientist Gwendolyn Mink argues that "maternalist reformers defined the family as the crucible of Americanism and emphasized the special responsibilities of motherhood to democracy;" therefore, throughout the Inter-War years, assimilation into the American culture became an important, and even vital, piece of mothers' aid programs, such as Mothers' Pensions.[82] Mothers who supplemented their pension with part-time employment used day nurseries like the ones at Sophie B. Wright and Franklin Street, giving assimilation devices such as Mother's Clubs and Nurse Maids Clubs an increased importance into and after World War I. Settlement workers hoped to

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[78] The connection to Sophie B. Wright and Detroit settlement workers remains hazy. Wright's center of influence was New Orleans. See *The Sophie B. Wright Day Nursery and Kindergarten, 1916* in FW, Box 1, folder 3.

[79] UCS, Box 67, folder 4 (Sophie Wright Settlement; Annual Report 1915-16, 1950-51).

[80] "History of Sophie Wright Settlement, 1890-1938," no author, typed script, 1938 in FW, Box 1, folder 3.

[81] *The Sophie B. Wright Day Nursery and Kindergarten, 1916*, UCS, Box 67, folder 4 (Sophie Wright Settlement; Annual Report 1915-16, 1950-51).

[82] Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood*, 29.

reach female immigrants through these clubs as well as the husbands, fathers, and brothers of these women.

Like the nursery at Franklin Street, the Sophie B. Wright day nursery depended in large measure on philanthropic support. A 1911 pamphlet estimated that it cost the nursery twenty-five cents per day to keep a child. But when the nursery opened in 1909, it only charged parents a "nominal fee" of five cents per day for each child. By 1911, that fee increased to ten cents per day for one child and five cents per day for each additional child from the same family, making it necessary for them to raise about $1,200 in donations each year to meet expenses.[83] Operations continued throughout the 1920s with little change to program offerings. Mothers looked favorably on opportunities to gather as a group to exchange information on parenting concerns. The nursery closed temporarily in 1932 from a combination of mothers losing their jobs to the Depression and too few philanthropic resources to offset nursery expenses. But by 1934, it reopened for fear that parents were leaving their children unattended in their homes, or worse, loose on Detroit streets.[84] Daily rates then ranged from ten to twenty-five cents per child depending on the income of the mother.

In keeping with Detroit's strong organization along ethnic and religious lines, Jewish and Catholic leaders began to build day nurseries that catered to their faithful. The United Jewish Charities of Detroit (UJCD) established a kindergarten just two years after the organization formed in 1899. A gift from UJCD President Bernard Ginsburg in 1903 allowed them to open the Ida E. Ginsburg Day Nursery. Like most day nurseries, it operated from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., but unlike Protestant and Catholic nurseries, it closed Saturday (for Sabbath reverence) and Sunday.[85]

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[83] *The Sophie B. Wright Day Nursery, 1911*, FW, Box 1, folder 3.

[84] "History of Sophie Wright Settlement, 1890 to 1938"; and Helen M. Johnston, "Sophie Wright Settlement: A Brief Statement of the History of this Organization and of the Work Which it is Now Doing," in FW, Box 1, folder 3 (History 1884-1945).

[85] Prior to the creation of the UJCD, the Beth El Hebrew Relief Society, Self-Help Circle, Hebrew Ladies Serving Society, and the Jewish Relief Society of Shaarey Zedek operated on their own. The UJCD brought these charities under one roof to eliminate duplication of efforts. For detail

The Weinman Settlement, named for Jesuit priest Father F. L. Weinman who organized education for underprivileged children at the turn of the century, was established in 1904 and run by the League of Catholic Women. At the time it opened, Weinman — known informally as the Catholic Day Nursery — catered to a largely French Canadian and Irish clientele, along with a number of Italian and Syrian children. While it did not run a kindergarten, its headworker had graduated from normal school with a specialization in kindergarten education. From 1916 to 1920, she worked at Weinman on assignment from the Bureau of Recreation.[86] In 1921, the League of Catholic Women established a second community house, St. Rita's, whose headworker was a trained nurse and "pretty understanding in her relations to children and young people."[87]

Reading case records reveals a side to child care that has often been assumed as common practice but tougher to illustrate with evidence; that is, the role that neighbors and family relatives played in providing child care. With little or no institutional support, working parents either left their children alone or asked a neighbor to watch them. Case records from the Detroit Associated Charities show that sometimes parents paid their neighbors to care for their children, and that some organizations — in particular, the United Jewish Charities in Detroit — paid for a woman to tend the children in their home. With the exception of foster parents, little documentation exists to help the historian place the family day care provider in her historical context; but evidence from the Associated Charities Investigation Bureau in Detroit offers an admittedly sketchy profile of situations

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on these societies, see Robert A. Rockaway, *The Jews of Detroit: From the Beginning, 1762-1914* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1986), 104-105.

[86] Robert Archery Woods and Albert J. Kennedy, *Handbook of Settlements* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1911), 144-145 in Box 24, folder 215 (Detroit, The Detroit Federation of Settlements, 1938-49) in the National Federation of Settlements and Day Nursery Collection [hereafter NFSDN] at the Social Welfare History Archives [hereafter SWHA]; and "Field Report," no author, no date in NFSDN, Box 74, folder 6 (Settlement-MI, Detroit, Fr. Weinman Settlement, 1941-54).

[87] "Field Report, no author, no date, NFSDN, Box 74, folder 3 (Settlements - MI, Detroit, St. Rita's Community House, 1921-45).

where leaving children in their homes became a viable option for some wage-earning mothers.[88]

The case of the Rosenzweig family illustrates how the UJCD took responsibility for supporting this family through hard times, including arranging for child care.[89] Jacob and Anna Rosenzweig had emigrated to Detroit from Austria in 1905 with their three young children, ages four, two, and one year. By November 1912, the family grew to seven children and Anna entered the Howell Sanitarium for treatment of tuberculosis. Jacob earned a living peddling, at which he made $11 per week. The family appealed to Detroit Public Welfare which paid Anna's sanitarium expenses, and the UJCD which hired a woman at $25 per month to care for the Rosenzweig children. Anna Rosenzweig returned to her home on January 20, 1913; however, she was still not well enough to take care of her children, and UJCD continued their "relief." In spite of her illness, Anna delivered two more sons (one at the age of thirty-nine), and the UJCD continued to assist the Rosenzweig's in the form of $50 cash relief and clothing. By April 1919 when agency documentation ends, the older children were contributing heavily to the family economy. As their father continued to peddle through Detroit streets, the eldest, eighteen-year-old Alfred, labored at two jobs — the Commerce Motor Company and the Detroit Opera House — while sixteen-year-old Nora clerked at Kline's Store and the Robinson-Cohen Company.

The investment made in this family may seem unusual, but the UJCD often reached out to Jewish families to keep them out of institutions. When a Russian immigrant couple requested assistance because the husband broke his wrist, the UJCD accepted without question that his wife was "unable to work — small children" and gave

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[88] I refer to mothers because only mothers were present in the instances which I found the use of family day care providers in Detroit.

[89] UCS Cases, folder 7, Case 2531. Cases drawn from UCS Collection, Series III, Box 19, Case Studies 1919 [hereafter, UCS Cases]. All names have been changed to protect client confidentiality. A full explanation of how these cases were used by Detroit reformers in the 1920s is provided in Chapter 5, note 3.

the family temporary aid until he could once more fully support his family.[90] Some women arranged and paid for family day care on their own initiative. Lettie Kivka, described in the files as a "Russian Poland" immigrant, found herself alone with a nineteen - and a two-month-old baby, and no resources to pay the $5 per week rent on her one-room apartment. Kivka's husband, also a "Russian Poland" immigrant, had deserted her two weeks earlier, and she approached the DAC wishing to place their infant for adoption. Breast feeding kept her from earning wages and the mother saw no other option than to give up her two-month-old baby in order to focus on the health of her other child. Perhaps recognizing that the mother suffered from some post-partum depression, the social worker advised Kivka to keep the infant, and instead to swear out a warrant for the arrest of her husband for non-support. Three days later, on May 2, 1919, Kivka made the warrant. Upon re-investigation in September, the social worker could not find Kivka or her children at home, and learned from a neighbor that the woman worked outside the home. After a couple of visits throughout the month, the social worker found another woman in the Kivka home taking care of the two boys. When questioned about the whereabouts of the mother, the woman replied that Kivka paid her $8 per week to care for the boys. The worker later learned from Kivka that she earned $13 per week, making her child care expenses over half of her salary.[91]

While an informal economy of family day care providers operated in Detroit, most women in need of child care turned to settlement house day nurseries. By the 1920s, the settlement house also became a site for parental education as increased interest in child study ushered nursery play schools into Detroit. For example, at the Dodge Community House in Hamtramck, mothers dropped off their children at the nursery school then

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[90] UCS Cases, folder 7, Case 4273.

[91] UCS Cases, folder 16, Case 10672.

attended either a mother's club meeting designed to teach them successful ways to rear their children or a Home Hygiene class taught by the Board of Health.[92]

An important distinction in the race, class, and ethnicity of mothers using the Dodge nursery school must be emphasized. Wives of Dodge auto workers were white Protestants, well on their way to achieving a middle-class status, even though their husbands worked in the factories. Dodge Community House resembled more a recreational center than a settlement house. Day nurseries served those parents forced to work outside the home; nursery play schools catered to women who could afford to stay out of the workforce. In fact, by the 1920s, some middle-class women yearned for free time away from their young children where they could gather in conversation with like-minded mothers. Such women began organizing child study groups through their churches, service clubs, and social centers. In 1927, congregations as diverse as Bethel Evangelical (fifty women), St. John's Episcopal (twenty mothers), and the Christian Church at the General Motors Building (ten mothers) invited experts from the Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training to guide mothers in these sessions.[93] From Autumn 1926 to April 1927, Merrill-Palmer faculty regularly met with the Detroit Council of Jewish Women, and thirty-one Junior League mothers met two times a week for four weeks to exchange information on child care.[94]

Settlement house residents also encouraged this kind of interaction among their working-class guests. They called on Merrill-Palmer instructors to facilitate at mother's club meetings and to hold special classes in child care. They also asked them to train settlement staff. For example, Tau Beta personnel organized a course for day nursery matrons from various community houses and orphanages. Throughout the Spring of 1925, the group met at the Merrill-Palmer School for a "series of six discussions on the

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[92] *Dodge Community House Fifteenth Anniversary Report, 1922-1937* in NFSDN, Box 35, folder 353 (MI, Detroit, Dodge House 1925-1954).

[93] The development and influence of the Merrill-Palmer School is analyzed in detail in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

[94] "Extension Report, 1927," in MP, Box 2, folder 2 (Extension; Reports 1923-40).

growth, development, education, and management of the pre-school child."[95] Two years later, Tau Beta invited Merrill-Palmer faculty to their day nursery to train six women who volunteered in the day nursery. Tau Beta admitted the training was "an effort to give completely untrained young women some idea of the scope and importance of their responsibilities for preschool children in the day nursery."[96]

This kind of in-service training among day nursery staff was not unique to Detroit facilities, but most nurseries did not operate near a center dedicated to the training of early childhood educators. The presence of the Merrill-Palmer School helped promote child care training among semi-professionals working in nurseries, and encouraged mothers from all backgrounds to seek out child-rearing information. Soon after its dedication, the Merrill-Palmer School became an active participant in the development and delivery of quality child care for working-class children, and its experts accepted the challenge to work with public advocates.

Public/Private Interactions in Caring for Detroit's Children

Public moneys energized day care programs in Detroit prior to World War II in two important areas: first, with the enactment in 1913 of Mothers' Pensions in Michigan; and then in 1933 with the operation of emergency nursery schools funded with Works Progress Administration dollars. Both of these publicly-funded programs depended on private organizations which already operated and staffed educational and day care programs. Mothers' Pension Officers, knowing that most of their clients continued to earn wages, steered mothers toward the use of local day nurseries rather than placing their children in a boarding home. Federal officials then used these day nurseries to employ out-of-work professionals once the Depression began to wreak havoc on the nation in the 1930s.

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[95] "Extension Report, 1925," in Ibid.
[96] "Extension Report, 1927," in Ibid.

Mothers' Pensions came to the aid of Michigan's "single mothers" in 1913 through the endorsement of the Michigan Federation of Clubs.[97] States reserved the right to define which mothers deserved aid. Michigan was one of the few states to maintain a fairly liberal understanding of the term "single mother." In contrast to many states which only approved widows, eligible mothers in Michigan included:

> widows, divorcees when alimony is not collectable, deserted women when the desertion has been for more than two years, wives of men who are confined in State institutions for the insane or who are patients in sanitariums for tuberculosis, and unmarried mothers.[98]

Michigan, Tennessee and Nebraska were the only three states that made provisions for unmarried mothers. Yet, those mothers remained a small segment of women who received a pension because in 1921 unmarried mothers accounted for only one percent of the seven thousand pension recipients in Michigan.[99] Whereas many states required women to either be a U.S. citizen or in the process of application for citizenship, Michigan had no citizenship requirement; but, it did adhere to residency requirements of two years in the State and one year in the County. Children had to live with their mother, and upon inspection by a pension worker, the mother "must [have been] found suitable or trainable."[100]

Mothers' Pensions, however, did not solve the problem of poverty among single mothers because very few mothers who received a pension could fully support their families on the allowance awarded to them. According to the Visiting Housekeeper Association in Detroit, a woman with one child needed a minimum monthly income of $11.51 to properly provide for her family. Since the maximum pension allotted for one

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[97] Theda Skocpol explains that the Michigan Federation began their advocacy three years earlier when it declared in the Biennial of the General Federation of Women's Clubs that "at the coming session of our Legislature, [we] will introduce a bill of our own entitled 'An Act to Provide for the Pensioning of Indigent Children of School Age,' " as quoted in Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 444. See also pages 548-49 of her Appendix Two.

[98] Claire M. Sanders, "Parental Education in the Mothers' Pension Department of Detroit," in MP, Box 26, folder 5 (Conferences; Parental Education, 1926), 63-66.

[99] Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 149. See also Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 467.

[100] Sanders, "Parental Education," 64.

child was only $3.00 — and rarely did the Court award a mother the maximum amount — most mothers supplemented their pension allowance with waged labor. A mother of one child in Wayne County usually received an average award of only $2.79. Out of 913 Wayne County pension recipients in the year 1918-19, only 99 women or 10.8 percent had no source of income other than a Mothers' Pension; 339 women or 37 percent of the recipients were employed outside of their own home in either local factories or domestic day work.[101]

The greatest opportunity by far for these mothers to earn wages lay in the lowest paying and most insecure segment of the economy, domestic day work. One hundred eighty-nine pensioned women found jobs as day laundresses or domestics; fifteen mothers worked in restaurants; and twenty-two labored as janitors in office buildings. Eighty-six mothers worked in factories while only seventeen women clerked in retail and office establishments. Eight women reported "miscellaneous" as their job. Only seventy-nine women or 8.6 percent took work into their home, such as washing or sewing, showing that by 1918, women could find more opportunity working in factories and other manufacturing interests. That option seemed to be more popular among the caseloads of certain Pension Officers, as illustrated in Table 7 below which lists the various ways in which the 1918-19 recipients pieced together an income for their family. Five Pension Officers divided the case load of 913 recipients between them. Ten percent of mothers monitored by Worker E brought work into their home while only .06 percent of Worker A's mothers used that option to supplement their income.[102]

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[101] Research Bureau of the Detroit Associated Charities and Visiting Housekeeper Association, "Report of Mothers' Pensions and Family Budgets," September 21, 1918 in UCS, Box 5, folder 11.

[102] Ibid.

Table 7: Sources of Income for Mothers' Pension Recipients of the Wayne County Probate Court, 1918-19. (Categorized by Case Worker, A-E)

Type of Income*	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Number of cases held by each case worker	153	156	225	181	198	913
Employed outside home (domestic or factory)	45	74	78	71	71	339
Employed inside home (washing, sewing, etc.)	1	12	20	5	21	79
Boarding other children	1	1	1	2	2	7
Living in relatives' homes	11	3	27	14	21	66
Assisted by relatives in ways other than living with them	7	10	34	19	31	101
Wages from Older Children	34	41	60	39	55	229
Roomers and Boarders	41	39	52	42	48	222
Rent from property or free housing through ownership	22	20	30	27	31	130
Industrial accident, compensation or insurance annuity	2	1	3	2	5	13
Savings account resources	2	0	8	0	0	10
Private & public relief agencies, fraternal or church organizations	2	1	4	1	4	22
Government allotment, Red Cross funds, or income from sons or relatives in military service	4	4	2	0	8	21
Miscellaneous	0	2	2	0	0	4
No source other than pension	31	18	17	19	14	99

* Other than the category, "No source other than pension," many women are counted in more than one classification

Source: Research Bureau of Detroit Associated Charities and Visiting Housekeeper Association, "Report of Mothers' Pensions and Family Budgets," September 21, 1918.

While advocates of Mothers' Pensions argued that recipients should only work for wages part-time (if at all), household budgets forced many mothers to work six days a week. The Wayne County Probate Court only found 264 mothers eligible for the maximum pension, leaving nearly three-fourths of the 913 pensioned families receiving under their maximum eligibility amounts.[103] In a chart prepared by the Research Bureau of the DAC and the Visiting Housekeeper Association, supporters of higher pensions showed that among women employed outside the home, 157 mothers worked six days in a week while only twenty-six mothers worked one day in a week. The report cited the increase in outside work among pension recipients from an average of 3.5 days per week in 1917 to 4.3 days per week in 1918, wryly noting that "it is quite evident therefore that most of the employed women spend the greater part of the working period during the day away from their homes and children."[104]

Moreover, the average weekly income of a Mothers' Pension day worker as reported by the DAC totaled only $5.73. Mothers lucky enough to secure a job in a factory, might earn as much as $10.85 in a week; however, according to observations made by case workers interacting with pension recipients, 257 families or nearly 30 percent did not live on a "sufficient total income to maintain a comfortable family life if judged by appearances and observation only." When considering an "estimated theoretical budget," 414 or about 40 percent did not receive a sufficient income.[105]

Mothers' Pension recipients did not represent the most destitute women of the city, because 130 mothers or 14.2 percent either owned property for which they received rent or owned the home in which the family resided. Yet only ten women had a bank savings account that they could draw upon, making them a relatively cash poor group. As Zunz, Oestreicher, and Cooper argued, many working-class families relied on the wages of older children. This strategy did not end once a mother became eligible for a Mothers' Pension.

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[103] Ibid., Part III, 7.
[104] Ibid., Part II, 8.
[105] Ibid., Part II, 11.

Two hundred twenty-nine or 25 percent of pensioned families reportedly depended on the wages of older children, while another twenty-one women received money from a son or other male relative serving in the military. Mothers' Pensions reached 2,691 children in those 913 homes during the 1918-19 budget year. Contrary to the perception that relief supported large, uncontrolled families, most pensions supported mothers with two (31.6 percent) or three (27.3 percent) children. Only three recipients had eight children and only ten mothers supported their seven children with the pension.[106]

While Wayne County pension recipients represented "every class of society from the college graduate to the most ignorant peasant from a foreign land," they remained white. The County as well as the State of Michigan paid little attention to African American or Mexican mothers in need of a pension; in fact, Anglo social workers fell into the racist trap shared by most of Americans in believing stereotypes of the "naturalness" of single motherhood among African American women.[107] Since Black women often raised children alone throughout their history in America, it seemed natural for them to continue doing so with no help from the state. This exclusion extended to Mexican mothers, although for different reasons. Americans believed that since Mexicans originated from a "feudal" society they would expect to receive relief, but would not understand it as temporary aid.[108] These attempts to define who could mother contributed to efforts to restrain minority migrations into the Detroit area.

Detroit authorities also believed that if their city was inundated with an underclass, better they be white and trainable, making Americanization by 1920 an important feature of Mothers' Pension programs. Pension officers devoted many hours to organizing classes to educate immigrants about the United States including learning the English language, the meanings of legal holidays and national heroes, and citizenship.[109] The pension office also

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[106] Ibid., Part II, 1.
[107] Mink, *Wages of Motherhood*, 49-51.
[108] Ibid., 50.
[109] Sanders, "Parental Education," 65.

contracted with instructors from the Merrill-Palmer School to teach mothers proper hygiene and nutrition. The use of milk qualified as a special campaign as educators tried to convince Italian, Syrian, and Polish mothers the value of incorporating milk into children's diets.[110]

The numbers of pension recipients continued to increase into the 1920s. Wayne County recipients rose from 349 families in the week of January 6, 1915 to 968 families in the week of September 11, 1918.[111] Claire M. Sanders, Chief Probation Officer of the Juvenile Division of the Probate Court, reported in 1926 that 1,160 mothers drew Mothers' Pensions in Wayne County. Considering that 65 percent of those pension families never had been "dependent or known to any social agency prior to the death or removal of the father," Sanders defined these women as a "self-reliant" group that under "normal conditions" could plan for themselves and their families.[112]

This ability to plan proved critical to the success of pensioned mothers fulfilling their commitment to the State, because in accepting a pension, a mother also accepted that she had become an "employee" of the State. As "employer," the State demanded that she raise healthy, stable, patriotic citizens, and it willingly advised her on achieving this accomplishment. Pension Officers scrutinized families to uncover any signs of "poor discipline and poor child training, bad housekeeping, ill health, or badly adjusted financial arrangements."[113] If homes displayed any of the above conditions, the Pension Officer had the authority to enlist experts from Legal Aid, the Visiting Housekeeper Association, or the Wayne County Psychopathic Clinic to regulate the family's behavior. The State also believed that children should "cooperate with their mother in earning the Pension and [were] urged to assume their responsibility in taking the place of the father."[114]

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110 Ibid., 65-66.
111 "Report of Mothers' Pensions and Family Budgets, Part IV," 3-6.
112 Sanders, "Parental Education," 64.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid., 65.

Fifteen years after Michigan implemented Mother's Pensions, nearly two thousand families were using the aid in Wayne County. Pension officers believed that the absence of a father generated an "abnormal" situation which they needed to "replace and readjust."[115] Viewing a recipient family through its "physical, material, and social" conditions, by the late 1920s they were paying attention to the "social" forces intruding in a family's situation. Delinquency among adolescents reared in pensioned homes, especially among young girls, seemed to be of particular concern to pension officers. They believed that a youth's delinquency stemmed first from the removal or death of the father, then from the mother's "inadequate" treatment of the father's departure. According to Officer Sanders, "inadequate" mothers placed too much family responsibility on their *older* children who in turn rebelled against such an "autocratic" parental authority.[116] Sanders explained that:

> The adequate mother, we find, does the very thing in her home that the pension officer does in the homes where the mother is inadequate. Unconsciously she places more and more responsibility upon the older children only, but upon all of them, and gradually they measure up and develop the capacity to fill the place left vacant by the father.[117]

If mothers forced adult responsibility on only their older children (usually daughters for help with child care, meal preparation, and cleaning) these children would ultimately reject all responsibility in the home, instead turning to the street and its various amusements and vices. To stem the tide of delinquency, Sanders argued, society needed to review its labeling of girls as immoral and focus on educating both the mother and her children about how to organize their family. In explaining her views on labels, Sanders stated that "in three years of work with delinquent girls I have yet to find an immoral girl, I think, under the age of sixteen. I do not believe we can use the term 'immoral' in dealing with children."[118] Instead, Sanders suggested, child advocates needed to focus on educating the mother about how best to organize her family now that the traditional head-

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[115] Claire M. Sanders, "Family Life of Today as Seen Through Mothers' Pension and Girls' Neglect Work," in MP, Box 21, folder 1 (Conferences; Home Problems, 1927), 12.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., 14.

[118] Ibid., 13.

of-household was no longer available to help her. Children had to learn how to handle their new role as helpmate in the home.

Sander's concerns regarding juvenile delinquency typified the thinking among adolescent officials. The "girl problem" became a serious dilemma for parents and professionals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Located in the adolescent female body, contemporary debates banded the expert with the parent in sometimes futile attempts to control daughters. Moral reform campaigns targeted the regulation of female adolescent sexuality as the primary solution to containing male sexual indiscretions. Complicit in these campaigns, working-class parents used the newly ordered regulation to maintain parental authority over their daughter's bodies, sexuality, and wage-earning capacity.[119]

As one of those experts, Sanders admitted that she "felt discouraged" about the work her office accomplished with adolescent girls. Other professionals, like Merrill-Palmer nursery school teacher Emma Henton agreed with Sanders, remarking that at eighteen-months-old, she and her colleagues did not get the children early enough to make a difference in their futures.[120] The establishment of the Merrill-Palmer School illustrates the way some concerned citizens hoped to deal with the "girl problem." By building a school dedicated to the training of young women in the domestic sciences, philanthropist Lizzie Merrill Palmer believed she could help stop deviant behavior among girls as young as ten by "fitting them mentally, morally, physically and religiously for the discharge of the functions and service of wifehood and motherhood."[121]

Public school education represented another attempt to reach adolescent girls. Officials in Detroit began looking at how they could better prepare working-class

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[119] See Ruth M. Alexander, *The "Girl Problem": Female Sexual Delinquency in New York, 1900-1930* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*; and Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*. See also Kyle Emily Ciani, " 'Problem Girls': Gendering Criminal Acts and Delinquent Behavior," *Journal of Women's History* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 203-214.

[120] Sanders, "Family Life of Today," 13.

[121] Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Homemaking, *Third Annual Report, 1922* (Detroit: The Merrill-Palmer School, 1922), 1.

adolescent girls for the work of mothering. Using the principles of industrial school training, both elementary and early childhood educators began incorporating housewifery and infant/toddler hygiene and nutrition into classroom curriculums. They first focused their attention on a working-class and racially-mixed neighborhood to introduce their experiment. In March 1928, the Detroit Board of Education (DBE) and the Merrill-Palmer School sponsored the opening of an inter-racial nursery school in Garfield Public School. It became the first of a series of public nursery schools established through the collaboration of the DBE, the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), and the Merrill-Palmer School.[122]

Fifteen children attended the Garfield nursery which maintained typical nursery school hours of 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Yet, the clientele represented a notable change from the typical nursery school student; officials selected children from a waiting list of 130 working-class families in the Garfield Public School neighborhood. This group included a sizable African American and foreign-born population, representing the first public effort to desegregate education and sensitize Detroit to its racial problems. An even distribution of boys and girls from immigrant and African American families attended Garfield. It also served as a vocational education tool to teach elementary girls how to care for young children. Girls learned how to properly care for their younger siblings, training which also prepared them for tending other people's children, perhaps for pay.

Nursery schools had always catered to families whose mothers did not work for wages, and in fact, nursery school programs depended on the active participation of attendees' mothers. But children attending the Garfield Nursery School belonged to families with wage-earning mothers whose older brothers and sisters dropped them at the school in the morning and picked them up in the afternoon. Nursery school teachers tried to connect with the mothers of enrolled children, yet they understood that these women had

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[122] Mabel Robinson, "The Garfield Nursery School," *Practical Home Economics* 9 (February 1931): 39 and 56.

little time in their busy schedules to be as actively involved in the program as suggested in nursery school guidelines. Their schedules left little or no chance for nursery school teachers and parents to communicate; but in a rare instance of outreach like that evidenced in Boston's Ruggles Street Nursery School, Garfield teachers regularly made home visits in the evening to interact with the parents of their young students. Yet, in June, 1931, the Board of Education closed the program due to a lack of funds — a pattern which would plague Detroit public nursery schools into the 1950s — only to re-open it when FERA money became available in 1933.[123]

By 1930, 1,568,662 people called Detroit their home.[124] Wage workers numbered 689,566 with a majority who earned their pay in the manufacturing sector (56.2 percent). But those figures would soon change as the nation experienced a disabling economic depression and Detroit would become one of the hardest hit cities. By May 1934, Detroit officials saw 42,710 people on relief; 54 percent of those recipients had lost a manufacturing job.[125] Out of fifty-nine U.S. cities surveyed by the Works Progress Administration in March 1935 for cost of living averages, Detroit ranked the tenth most expensive city in which a four-person manual worker's family could live. Of those cities under study between March 1935 and March 1937, Detroit posted the greatest increase in cost of living expenses (8.9 percent).[126] While much of Michigan experienced severe economic shifts in the early 1930s, dealing with unemployment in Detroit clearly posed a serious problem for city and state officials. An embezzlement scandal rankled the trust of State officials, and on April 3, 1936, the governor made official his appointment of the

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[123] Grace Helen Graveline, "Twenty Years of Public Nursery School Education in the City of Detroit: Implications for Future Planning," (Master of Education thesis, Wayne State University, 1948), 16-17.

[124] *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*, Population Vol. I, 10.

[125] Katherine D. Wood, *Urban Workers on Relief: Part II — The Occupational Characteristics of Workers on Relief in 79 Cities*, Table 12 — Industry of Workers on Relief May 1934 and of Gainful Workers 1930 in 79 Cities (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1936), 94.

[126] Margaret Loomis Stecker, *Intercity Differences in Costs of Living in March 1935, 59 Cities* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), 2 and 9.

Welfare and Relief Study Commission to analyze the delivery of public welfare in Michigan.[127]

Their studies paid great attention to issues of dependency such as the distribution of Mothers' Pensions, but they devoted little analysis to the delivery of child care operating as an Emergency Work Relief component of the Works Progress Administration.[128] In fact, the mentality of establishing emergency nursery schools in Michigan followed national thinking: that these facilities gave work to unemployed teachers, thereby, reducing the number of adults "on the dole," protecting future citizens — welfare children — from parents unable to "properly" care for their children. That philosophy drove the federal government to earlier approve Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) aid in 1933 for the funding of WPA nursery schools throughout the state. According to the State Emergency Welfare Commission, 161 centers with 351 teachers operated in Michigan within the first year of the project.[129]

Before the infusion of federal money, Detroit tried to solve its day care problems with its own initiatives. In addition to the Garfield nursery school experiment, the Merrill-Palmer School and Department of Public Welfare collaborated to create the Minnie E. Jeffries Canfield Unit nursery school in June 1929. Named for Public Welfare Commissioner Jeffries, this program combined components of the day nursery and nursery school philosophies with the explicit agenda to assist wage-earning women. Organizers hoped to:

> 1) provide care for children below school age so that the mother may become a wage earner;

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[127] Richard T. Ortquist, *Depression Politics in Michigan, 1929-1933* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1982), 152-155.

[128] For information on the State of Michigan's Welfare and Relief Study Commission see State Archives, Record Group 35, Boxes 9 - 16. The study of public aid to mothers and their children can be found in Box 14, folder 5.

[129] State of Michigan Welfare and Relief Commission, Unemployment *and Relief in Michigan: First Report of the State Emergency Welfare Relief Commission, July 1933-October 1934* (Lansing: January, 1935), 116.

2) give these children the benefit of the most recent advances in the field of child education to further their physical and mental development;

3) give to the parents knowledge that will fit them to deal more wisely with their children; and

4) provide a laboratory where high school students may observe and assist in the training of young children.[130]

Welfare planners envisioned a series of nursery schools opening across the city in homes converted to accommodate children (predecessors to contemporary family day care homes). A second unit was to open in the Spring of 1930, but again, lack of funds shifted the plans to a low priority status. The goal of the Jeffries nurseries was to help wage-earning mothers with child care. Hours of operation differed from the traditional nursery school in that they would run from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., six days a week. The Canfield Unit served eighty children and enlisted student assistants from the Merrill-Palmer School and the College of the City of Detroit (now Wayne State University) to help its supervisor and two nursery school teachers.[131] The City Physician made four calls per week to the nursery. Like the Garfield Nursery School, Canfield incorporated a vocational training component for local high school students. According to program supervisor Irma Unruh, one goal of the Minnie Jeffries Nursery schools was to reduce the risk of children growing into juvenile delinquents by offering their parents (usually mothers) day care. They also hoped to reduce the stigma attached to using direct relief. But by Fall 1932, the Public Welfare office closed the Jeffries Nursery School, citing the loss of jobs by women as their reason.

FERA grants would allow nursery school leaders to establish a network of emergency nursery schools in Detroit by the Fall of 1933. In Detroit, facilities already providing day care received FERA funds. They included day nurseries at Franklin Street Settlement, Neighborhood House, and Sophie Wright Settlement, and nursery schools at

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[130] "Minnie E. Jeffries Nursery Schools, Canfield Unit, Annual Report," MP, Box 64, folder 1.

[131] Irma Unruh, "Detroit's Nursery Schools," *The Survey* 69 (April 1930), 81.

the Brightmoor Community Center and Garfield.[132] The guidance of faculty at the Merrill-Palmer School helped each facility to feature parent education as a critical piece of their programs. The Detroit Board of Education became the administrative agency overseeing operations, while the Department of Public Welfare participated by loaning both equipment and staff. For instance, it took equipment and supplies from the Jeffries program out of storage and transferred Jeffries supervisor, Irma Unruh, to direct the opening of the emergency nursery schools. The first of Detroit's emergency nursery schools officially opened in December 1933.[133] Directing these nursery schools became a permanent position for Unruh and two of her field supervisors, who served in their respective positions until 1943. As Grace Graveline argued in her study of Detroit's public program, nursery schools and the children they served benefited from this continuity in leadership.[134]

Merrill-Palmer faculty provided much of this continuity by serving in emergency relief leadership positions at the local, state and national levels. Edna Noble White, director of the School, was appointed the chairperson of the National Advisory Committee on Emergency Education Programs. In this capacity, she represented the National Association of Nursery Education, the National Council of Parent Education, and the Association for Childhood Education on the parent education programs funded through FERA.[135] The School approved a leave of absence for parent education professor, Agnes M. Tilson, Ph.D., so that she could prepare parent education materials for the National Council of Parent Education in the Office of Education in Washington, D.C. Tilson also assisted at the regional level by training emergency nursery staff in Ohio. From February

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[132] Dorothy Williams, "Emergency Nursery Schools Battle Results of Depression," *Detroit Free Press*, no date, found in Detroit/Nursery Schools (misc. material) manuscript collection, Burton.

[133] Graveline, "Twenty Years of Public Nursery School Education in Detroit," 28-29. Unruh's time was first contributed by the Department of Public Welfare and then by the Board of Education.

[134] Ibid., 30.

[135] Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training, *Eleventh Report, September 1933 to June 1935* (Detroit: The Merrill-Palmer School, May 1936), 71-72.

1934 to early 1935, the School lent the expertise of nutrition specialist, Leila McGuire, to the Michigan State Emergency Welfare Relief Commission to direct its nutrition service. Nursery school director, Florence Willson Duhn, assisted in a series of two-day workshops held at eight centers in West Virginia.[136] The School also sponsored numerous workshops and training sessions throughout Michigan and Detroit, often lending their staff and physical plant to the relief effort.

The Depression changed the way that public agencies and private organizations worked with one another. Public agencies began to rely on the aid that private concerns could offer Detroit residents. But the definition of public also expanded, as private organizations learned how to work with the federal government in addition to city and county agencies like the Department of Public Welfare. By 1939 when the manufacturing sector heated up to provide war munitions, settlement houses continued to provide substantial child care to working parents. Nursery workers delivered school-age children to-and-from their school, and every morning, nurses examined children who attended Detroit day nurseries to ensure that no communicable disease infected other children using the facility. Even children who did not attend the day nursery but lived in the neighborhood were eligible for clinic services at some settlement houses like Franklin Street.[137] These kinds of services were practical for Detroit because they kept children and adolescents off the street and healthy, melding a variety of advocate suggestions and hopes into one program.

Detroit's emergency nursery schools served as the foundation for establishing war nurseries throughout the metropolitan area during the World War II era. The Detroit Board of Education served as the local administrative arm, but Washington, D.C. ultimately made decisions regarding funding levels. By April 1943, sixteen units were operating, although

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[136] Ibid., 70.

[137] "The Story of Franklin Settlement," no author, typed script, [c. 1939] in FW, Box 1, folder 3 (History 1884-1945).

three units quickly closed due to low enrollment.[138] Parents could count on these facilities being open twelve hours per day, six days a week. For reasons connected to the philosophy of parent nurturing, staff encouraged parents to use the centers sparingly; but most children spent ten hours per day at day care, which the general public would come to call the war nursery schools.

The State Day Care Committee of the State Council of Defense (chaired by Edna Noble White), the Merrill-Palmer School, the Detroit Board of Education and Wayne State University collaborated in opening experimental "canteens" around the city for school-age children. The first "canteen" joined a nursery school at the Hutchins Intermediate School located adjacent to three elementary schools.[139] Funded with Lanham Act moneys, the committee designed the canteens to "keep the children of war-working mothers and fathers off the streets and out of traffic danger."[140] By May 1944, nineteen canteens operated in the Detroit metropolitan area.[141] After the committee discovered that many mothers worked night shifts, it created a night child care center for children ages two through fourteen years. The experimental center opened July 19, 1943; the city, however, soon developed a system of boarding homes in which children went home to their mothers on Friday night for the weekend.[142] The Junior Boarding School, which cared for a maximum of twenty children, operated for two years and then closed in September 1945.

In November 1944, six voluntary agencies — among them the Franklin Settlement Nursery and Sophie Wright Settlement Nursery — approached the Detroit Board of Education to petition the Board to "extend the services of the Federally-supported child care program to include the children of working mothers who are now enrolled in these private

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[138] Graveline, "Twenty Years of Public Nursery School Education," 37.

[139] City of Detroit, *Final Report of Nursery and Extended School Services, 1943-46* File No. 5394, (Detroit: Board of Education, 1947), 27.

[140] Owen C. Deatrick, "Schools to Keep Children Off Streets this Summer," *Detroit Free Press*, March 1943.

[141] Board of Education, City of Detroit, "Nursery and Extended School Services roster," May 1944 in Detroit/Nursery Schools II (misc. material), Burton.

[142] Graveline, "Twenty Years of Public Nursery School Education," 44.

nursery schools."[143] Parents wanted to continue using these facilities rather than transferring their children to a new center probably located outside their home neighborhood or work area. These voluntary programs, known as the War Chest Nurseries, operated with parent fees and local War Chest moneys which preceded Lanham Act funds by three months. The Detroit War Chest argued that they should not have to fund the nurseries since this support could now come from the Lanham Act. They also wanted the nurseries in question to become part of the Board of Education Nursery and Extended Care program.

The problem for parents using the War Chest Nurseries became location. If these facilities closed parents would have to transport their children across town to Lanham centers. The request by the War Chest Nurseries argued that first, the extended program excluded "reconversion and Post-War period social need" children such as servicemen's orphans; and second, it would involve a "dual authority" between the private and public agency which the private programs were unwilling to engage in. The Detroit War Chest countered that War Chest Nursery Schools simply duplicated Lanham programs. Yet, these private facilities knew their constituents and fought hard to maintain services within the neighborhood. The units continued to operate at full capacity, rendering the issue unresolved until April 1945 when demand for child care began to wane.[144] Women workers were forced to give up their defense jobs to returning servicemen, however, many of those same women needed to continue earning wages for their families. They moved into lower paying service sector jobs, continuing to depend on the programs offered by sites like the War Chest Nursery Schools.

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[143] "Request to the Detroit Board of Education From Six Voluntary Agencies for Extension of Service to Children of Working Mothers," November 7, 1944, UCS, Box 64, folder 9 (War Chest Nursery Schools, 1944).

[144] Memorandum from Irene Murphy to Richard Bachman and Robert MacRae, Council of Social Agencies Metropolitan Detroit, April 12, 1945, UCS, Box 64, folder 10.

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The Detroit case illustrates how the cooperation between educators, personnel managers, and social service agencies was not enough to maintain public child care centers. Implemented with Lanham Act money in the 1940s, by 1957 only three of forty-plus centers remained in operation as Detroit officials gradually closed the centers as a cost-saving measure for the city. The general superintendent of the Detroit Welfare Department recommended the closures in order to free space for the public schools.[145] Mayor Miriani agreed, and in April, 1958, he slashed the $64,000 needed to run the nursery schools from the next year's city budget. To argue his point, Miriani used the United States Supreme Court ruling that a municipality cannot "spend City tax moneys for school purposes when a school district in the city levied its own taxes."[146] A collaborative project that worked to help Detroit's working-class population in the 1930s backfired twenty years later.

Interactions between public and private agencies were seldom smooth, with the private sector usually struggling to maintain some autonomy in the midst of federal bureaucracy and authority. Private concerns argued that they better knew the needs of their constituency and they tried to serve as a voice for their working-class clients. In Detroit, organizations that provided day care benefited financially from being closer to the centers of national power in both the private world of settlements (i.e., Hull House) and the public world of government intervention (i.e., Mothers' Pensions and FERA).

This would not be the case for San Diego as it remained removed from these power structures into the 1930s. Health seekers traveling to the coast would bring the first wave of professionals with them in the 1910s, and the integration of Progressive reforms changed the options available to some San Diego parents. Anglo reformers zeroed in on the needs of the Mexican family, and used the features taught by the settlement house movement to rectify poor access to medical services, discriminatory educational systems,

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[145] Harry Salsinger, "Working Parents Upset by Plan to Close Last 3 Day Centers, *The Detroit News*, 10, March 1957.

[146] "Day Nursery Plan Out, Mayor Says," *Detroit Free Press*, 18 April 1958.

and inadequate day care.[147] During the 1920s, child care programs established in the Progressive Era would be either refined or revoked. Reformers accepted federal guidance and grants that helped fund four emergency nursery schools by 1936. This day care structure, while small and inadequate for what lay ahead in the "Blitz Boom" of World War II, served as the basis for a coordinated child care system in San Diego.

[147] Scott Dittmyer and Kathryn Grant, "Historical Study of Neighborhood House," (M.A. thesis in Social Work, San Diego State University, 1978), 34-35; and Cynthia Jane Shelton, "The Neighborhood House of San Diego: Settlement Work in the Mexican Community, 1914-1940," (M.A. thesis in History, San Diego State University, 1975), 39.

Chapter 3

CREATING AN "APPEARANCE" OF DEVOTION: CHILD CARE FOR SAN DIEGO'S CHILDREN

"They have the appearance of being in a happy home watched over by a devoted mother to whom they constantly turn with zealous affection and confidence."

— Woman's Home Association & Day Nursery, 1890[1]

During the Holiday season in 1901, the Women's Home Association of San Diego (WHA) issued a city-wide financial appeal for their pet project, the Children's Home of San Diego. Crafted to attract contributions from local businesses, instead the appeal caught only the attentions of the already interested white, middle-class women involved in benevolent concerns. Like hundreds of organizations across the nation, the WHA directed its volunteerism toward the provision of safe and healthy environments for children. While not a perfect agenda, these women worked to balance the perceived custodial needs of parents with the health and welfare of children.

The challenge of providing child care offered San Diego reformers an opportunity to engage in a critical assessment of the cities social services. Prior to the labor mobilization experienced during World War II, care options included a boarding home operated by a benevolent society, day nurseries located at settlement houses, and federally-funded as well as experimental nursery schools. However, most San Diego working-class children were never exposed to these kinds of non-familial care. Instead, they either entered the workforce in the growing fields of service and light manufacturing jobs available or were cared for by relatives and neighborhood friends.

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[1] Report of the Woman's Home Association & Day Nursery for the year ending February 1, 1890, Box 10, folder (Mixed Programs, p.r. notes), SDCC.

An historic overview of San Diego during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals that economic fluctuation and proximity to the fluid Mexican/American border — as well as Anglo bias — shaped child care initiatives. Prior to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, Anglo and Mexican parents regularly found work in the Baja California port of Ensenada, leaving their children to be cared for by the Home. Staff took note of their residence but not of their citizenship. Yet while political boundaries may have been fluid, ethnic prejudice prevailed in the region. The long-standing image of the lazy, Mexican peasant influenced the kind of care made available to Mexican-heritage parents.

African American, Asian, and American Indian parents were also denied use of the few facilities available, forcing them to rely on familial and neighborhood relationships. In the late 1920s, the Junior League of San Diego opened a day nursery in a long-ignored section of town as one of its community service projects. Operated by volunteers, many of whom harbored racial and ethnic biases toward families in need of day care, the nursery closed after only six years of service.[2] To be sure, Anglo ideas of white superiority colored most interactions between San Diegans no matter their race or ethnicity. In the end, organizational child care in San Diego maintained an overwhelmingly white authority designed to assist white families.

Case records from 1889 to 1945 of the San Diego Children's Home & Day Nursery, the Advisory Council of the Associated Charities, and Traveler's Aid Society of San Diego provide evidence of typical scenarios facing the city. Responses recorded by reformers, parents, and community activists to these changes show how each struggled to maintain an illusion of San Diego as the perfect city on the Pacific Coast. Transient lifestyles of many workers in the area gave child welfare advocates fuel for arguments supporting non-familial care. They reasoned that parents who recently migrated into San

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[2] "Field notes, Children's Field/Day Nursery," Box 68, folder 688 (San Diego, CA, 1945) in Associated Junior League of America Collection [hereafter AJLA] located in the SWHA.

Diego had little or no family connections to tie them to the city, hence, they could easily abandon their child in the street with no familial or legal recourse to stop them. Nursery workers also believed that single parents should not have to raise their children alone, and they encouraged these parents to leave their children at the facility until a "proper" (which for them meant nuclear) home could be secured.

Tracing the child care arrangements made for Sara and Francine Wissner reveals how many San Diego working parents coped with lives made unstable by a transient workforce and fluctuating economy. On July 2, 1889, Peter Wissner took his daughters, Sara and Francine, to the San Diego Children's Home and Day Nursery (Home) so he could look for work. A single father when he admitted the girls, he returned to the Home two months later an employed, married man to collect his children. Wissner died one year later and their stepmother decided that living at the Home proved the best short-term care option for his daughters. They stayed at the facility for four months before returning to their stepmother on July 7, 1890. But their needs must have proved too great for her, because on August 5, 1891, the girls returned to the Home. With no blood relations to take them in, the sisters remained in the Home until their eighteenth birthdays.[3]

In San Diego, a precarious economic climate led many working-class parents to re-evaluate their positions as family providers which, in turn, caused them to reflect on their value as mothers and as fathers. Temporary jobs and ill health often led to material and familial loss. The profits enjoyed by hundreds of San Diegans beginning in 1885 proved tenuous when the prior land boom deflated in just four short years. Families lured into the area by jobs in construction and service industries experienced serious economic distress by the 1890s. Troubled by unemployment and isolation from the primary

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[3] Entries 20/21, 82/83, San Diego Day Nursery Register 1880-1909, Box 17, SDCC. Nursery matrons used the Register to record details of family's lives, therefore, I have changed all names in the Register to protect client confidentiality. Hereafter , entries from the 1880-1909 Register will be referred to as SDCCa plus the Register number (i.e., SDCCa 20). A slash between numbers (as in the above 20/21 and 82/83) indicates children from the same family.

railroad feeders, many San Diegans became casualties of the nationwide depression in the 1890s.

Carefully orchestrated business ventures revived the sagging economy, turning the "quaint" resort town into a major city that, by 1945, supported 400,000 residents. Workers found that the bulk of employment opportunities lay in defense manufacturing and support services to the thousands of servicemen stationed in San Diego. Naval officials discovered that San Diegans catered to the needs of servicemen and congressmen alike when the city received a $25,000 appropriation for aviation training in March 1911.[4] The installation of major naval bases in San Diego County helped create "a new federal city" in the West as construction, technological, and industrial concerns scurried to serve the military.[5] Whereas the town could count only 2,900 residents in 1885, nearly 75,000 people called San Diego home in 1920.

Child care programs, however, did not grow in proportion to the city. Stern critiques peppered the conversations of child advocates. Their studies publicly noted that San Diego needed to open more day nurseries and offer better care to the few children who were receiving care. Those findings resulted in the expansion of day nurseries as well as a reassessment of the overall treatment of children in the city.

Victorian San Diego: "American Italy" or Rough "Stingaree"

In 1896, San Diego visitor J. W. Hanson, described the city as the *ultima thule*, "The American Italy," emphasizing a Mediterranean beauty that would create a world-renowned resort town and attract people hoping to heal their consumption.[6] Hanson's work was only one in a myriad of promotional pieces touting the advantages of a San Diego life, which included clean air, plentiful cheap land, and neighborhoods free of

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[4] Richard F, Pourade, *Gold in the Sun, The History of San Diego* vol. 5 (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Co., 1965), 122.

[5] Roger Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Abraham Shragge, " 'A New Federal City': San Diego During World War II," *Pacific Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (August 1994): 333-361.

[6] J. W. Hanson, A.M., D.D., *The American Italy: Southern California* (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Co., 1896), 258.

destitute immigrants. Although boosters used the romance of an Hispanic past to entice visitors to the coastal town, ethnic and racial diversity was not something that San Diego businessmen promoted nor tried to achieve. Rather, they worked to attract white, middle - and upper-class families to the town.

In truth, San Diego was peopled by diverse groups including the Kumeyaay who arrived in the area as early as 40,000 to 48,000 years ago; Californios who settled in San Diego county under the Spanish flag in 1769; Mexican nationals securing their nation's foothold in California; and Anglo-American migrants in search of inexpensive land after the American conquest of Mexico in 1848.[7] Encounters between the Kumeyaah and Franciscan missionaries define much of San Diego's early years, marking it the first Spanish settlement in Alta California. In the late eighteenth century, Spain began colonizing the area with families — called Californios — who established a flourishing economy of land grant ranching and trade. The entry of Anglo-American men beginning in the 1850s, however, pushed the town south and away from the Hispanic center.[8]

The history of urban development in San Diego is a patchwork of land grant appropriation, misguided town planning, and failed market schemes.[9] After the American conquest and reapportionment of lands in 1848, Anglo businessmen began their desperate attempts to connect the southwestern seaport to national railroad routes only to lose to the city of Los Angeles.[10] Without the railroad, San Diego remained

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[7] The literature on these three periods of history is extensive. For a general overview of the Spanish and Mexican periods, see Donald Cutter and Iris H. W. Engstrand, *Quest for Empire: Spanish Settlement in the Southwest* (Golden , CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996). The affects of Anglo entry into southern California after the American conquest is analyzed by Lisbeth Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995); and Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

[8] A provocative analysis of this period that honors the complexity of borderlands relationships is provided by Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California.*

[9] Mario T. Garcia, "Merchants and Dons: San Diego's Attempt at Modernization, 1850-1860," *Journal of San Diego History* 21 (Winter 1975): 52-80.

[10] Competing for trade, economic opportunities, and residents, civic leaders in Los Angeles and San Diego became notorious for their rivalry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Southern Pacific railroad decision in the 1870s to use Los Angeles as its connection to San Francisco and the interior United States, left San Diego isolated for decades and resulted in inevitable growth for Los Angeles. San Diegans could not begin to successfully compete with Los Angeles until November 1885

merely a way station for land transport as its northern competitor increasingly secured manufacturing and trade contracts. Starting in the 1860s, Anglos bought and sold Pueblo lands at feverish rates, but when Los Angeles won the transcontinental railway link contract, San Diego remained removed from central trade and manufacturing feeds. Urbanization took hold only after San Diego officials gained control of the unfettered land speculation and established trade connections with the completion of the California Southern Railroad in 1883.[11]

San Diego's municipal population lay stagnant in 1880 at 2,900, a mere three hundred persons higher than the 1870 census.[12] But beginning in 1885, San Diego experienced a rapid and intense economic surge that swelled the town's population to 35,000 by 1888.[13] Anglos eager to make their fortune in land speculation, moved to the seaside community in droves, wildly investing in poorly capitalized economic ventures. Typical of Western boomtowns, a steady supply of vice entertainment offered relief to some San Diegans. Many of these transients turned part of their savings over to the establishments in the "Stingaree," a bawdy district that encompassed nearly one hundred city blocks of saloons, opium dens, prostitute stalls, and gambling houses.

Opportunities in San Diego proved attractive to more than just Anglos; African Americans fleeing the New South, Chinese immigrants, and Mexican nationals also began to settle in the area. Race, ethnicity, and class determined housing boundaries as the city settled into a system of self-segregation. African Americans purchased plots in

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when they welcomed the first transcontinental rail link. Railroad competition is explained in Rickey D. Best, "San Diego and the Gilded Age: The Efforts to Bring the Texas and Pacific Railroad to San Diego," *Journal of San Diego History* 34, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 253-280; Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 56-58; and Douglas L. Lowell, "The California Southern Railroad and the Growth of San Diego," *Journal of San Diego History* 31 (Fall 1985): 245-260. The literature on land reapportionment in southern California is extensive. In the case of San Diego, Clare B. Crane has written a succinct explanation of a rather complex issue in "The Pueblo Lands: San Diego's Hispanic Heritage," *Journal of San Diego History* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 104-127.

[11] Richard F. Pourade, *The Glory Years, The History of San Diego* vol. 4 (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Co., 1964), 141.

[12] Ibid., 183.

[13] Clarence A. McGrew, *City of San Diego and San Diego County: The Birthplace of California*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1922), 129.

the rural backcountry, staying away from center town until the 1890s. No firm numbers exist, but according to Black history scholar Robert Lloyd Carlton, between 1885 and 1890, the African American population in San Diego rose steadily. While it continued to increase throughout the early twentieth century, the population never reached the proportions of other communities that offered African-American migrants work and a chance to own land.[14] In 1885, there were only about two dozen African Americans in San Diego, although within two years this figure rose to "well over one hundred," with the 1890 Census reporting 289 Black people in the County. A growth in service jobs attracted more African Americans into the city, but residential covenants contained the Black population in the southeast area of the city, Logan Heights (or Barrio Logan to Mexican residents), a "clearly observable non-white neighborhood" by 1920.[15]

African Americans could use public transportation, but when it came to cab transport, the city limited them to the one Black-owned cab company in the area. That company could not accept fares outside the boundaries of Logan Heights. Most restaurants denied seating to African Americans, and theater owners directed them to balcony seats.[16] The "racial ban" at restaurants, hotels, and dance pavilions continued into the late 1940s and caused one post-war study to proclaim:

> The opposition to the patronage of negroes and other colored minorities in San Diego's places of public resort seems to be tighter and more extensive than in almost any of the other major urban communities of the Pacific Coast. Although these discriminations are in violation of the Civil Code of California, some proprietors appear to make a practice of settling such cases out of court. In other cases, the payment of fines seems to be regarded by proprietors as a routine expense of doing business in San Diego.[17]

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[14] Robert Lloyd Carlton, "Blacks in San Diego County, 1850-1900," (M.A. thesis, San Diego State University, 1977), 83.

[15] Gail Madyun, Larry Malone, and Robert Fikes, Jr., "Black Pioneers in San Diego: 1880-1920," *Journal of San Diego History* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 102.

[16] Gail Madyun, " 'In the Midst of Things': Rebecca Craft and the Women's Civic League," *Journal of San Diego History* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 30.

[17] Laurence I. Hewes, Jr., *Intergroup Relations in San Diego: Some Aspects of Community Life in San Diego Which Particularly Affect Minority Groups* (San Francisco: The American Council on Race Relations, 1946), 21.

Social services for African Americans remained minimal into the World War II boom period. In fact, when, in 1937, a young Black woman arrived at San Diego's Santa Fe train depot and requested directions to a "YWCA for colored women," a white Traveler's Aid worker had to make numerous calls to locate appropriate housing. The worker explained: "We managed to place her from our list of private places for colored people. She was advised where to go to secure employment."[18] Consequently, African American residents bitterly referred to San Diego as "the Mississippi of the West."[19]

Those few organizations available to African Americans were established by the Black community and received little assistance from Anglo sources such as the Associated Charities. For instance, in 1934, Rebecca Craft founded the Women's Civic League to provide educational scholarships for children and adolescents who lived in Logan Heights. The League soon expanded their agenda by distributing food, bedding, clothing, and household goods to African American families.[20] The League also took on the battle to hire an African American schoolteacher, a fight they would not win until 1942.[21] Consequently, prior to World War II, few African American children passed through the halls of the Children's Home.

In examining the African American population in San Diego, Robert Carlton described the area as a "white island," but his analysis fails to credit the growing diversity within the city's boundaries. In addition to the groups of American Indians living in the County, sizable numbers of Chinese and Mexican families began migrating into the area in the late nineteenth century. By the 1870s, work opportunities on the railroad and in clearing the San Diego River Channel gave Chinese male immigrants a reason to settle in

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[18] "1937 Annual Narrative Report," Box 2, folder 30 (Narrative Report, Circa 1926), in Traveler's Aid Society of San Diego Collection [hereafter TASSD], SDSU Spec. Coll. A group of African American women organized a branch of the YWCA in Logan Heights in 1929. It provided vocational classes and health education as well as housed African American women in need of a temporary home. See Clare Crane, *The San Diego YWCA: A Short History, 1907-1982*, (YWCA of San Diego County, 1982), 15-16.

[19] Crane, *San Diego YWCA*, 15.

[20] Madyun, " 'In the Midst of Things': Rebecca Craft and the Women's Civic League," 32.

[21] Ibid.; and Madyun, "Black Pioneers," 109.

San Diego.[22] Throughout the nineteenth century, however, San Diego's Chinese population never exceeded 2.6 percent of the total population and most of those residents were men.[23] Segregated from the rest of society, the Chinese governed themselves, managing the health and welfare of one another with little Anglo interference.

The sole interaction came from Presbyterian missionaries who opened the Chinese Mission School in 1885 to teach boys to read, write and speak English. According to Chinese church historians, the mission enrolled and boarded their students in an effort to segregate the Christianized Chinese from their "heathen" countrymen.[24] Mrs. Margaret Fanton, who began teaching at the school in 1907, was often referred to as Chinatown's first social worker as she gave physical and spiritual aid to the Chinese community. The Mission evolved into a social gathering for Chinese in San Diego, as well as a way station for Chinese immigrants arriving in the U.S.[25] Anglos ventured into "Chinatown" only to gamble in its notorious back alley games, fueling the rumors that the Chinese bartered with the devil to offer all sorts of vice to San Diegans.[26]

Mexican families also experienced segregation. Historian Albert Camarillo has explained how "barrioization" — the formation of Mexican neighborhoods socially, culturally, and politically segregated from Anglo sections of cities and towns — "ensured the persistence of Mexican society in California."[27] During the 1880s, most Mexicans

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[22] Judith Liu, "Celestials in the Golden Mountain: The Chinese in One California City, San Diego, 1870-1900," (M.A. thesis in Sociology, San Diego State University, 1977), 64.

[23] Yung, *Unbound Feet*, 293, 296. Compared to other California cities like San Francisco, San Diego's Chinese population was small. Using U.S. Census Bureau data, Yung calculated that the Chinese population in the United States grew from 34,933 in 1860 to 63,199 in 1870; to 105,465 in 1880; and to 107,488 in 1890. The affects of anti-Chinese immigration laws caused a sharp decline by 1900 as numbers dipped to 89,863 persons. Chinese living in San Francisco in 1900 totaled 13,954 or 15.5 percent of the total Chinese population.

[24] Alma Kathryn Robens, "Charlotte Baker: First Woman Physician and Community Leader in Turn of Nineteenth Century San Diego," (M.A. thesis in History, San Diego State University, 1992), 76-77; and San Diego Historical Association Oral History of Mrs. Bertha H. Hubbard in SDHS.

[25] See Liu, "Celestials in the Golden Mountain," 68-69; and Elizabeth C. MacPhail, "San Diego's Chinese Mission," *Journal of San Diego History* 23 (Spring 1977): 9-21.

[26] Kyle Emily Ciani, "Surviving Through Prostitution: A Comparison of Los Angeles and San Diego Prostitutes, 1850-1890," (M. A. thesis, University of San Diego, 1991).

[27] Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California* (San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser Publishing Company, 1984), 24-25.

still lived in Old Town which, located inland about five miles from the bay, was the center of colonial life in San Diego. This changed in the 1890s when the commercial center shifted south to accommodate Anglo business, and families migrated out of Old Town and into Logan Heights to be closer to work opportunities. Situated near the wharf among warehouses and canneries, Logan Heights grew into a sizable barrio in southern California, becoming congested by World War I with new arrivals from Mexico.

Social, economic, and political unrest pushed thousands of Mexicans into San Diego, and by the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, the city became a haven for many refugees. Table 8 illustrates the steady growth of the Mexican population in San Diego since the turn of the century.

Table 8: Mexican Population San Diego, 1900-1930

Year	Total Population	Mexican Population	% of Mexicans of Total City Population
1900	17,700	638 - 893	3.6 - 5.0
1910	39,578	1,588 - 1,595	4.0 - 4.0
1920	74,683	3,563- 4,028	4.7 - 5.4
1930	147,995	9,266-20,000	6.3-13.5

Source: Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California* (San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser Publishing Company, 1984), 34.

As an original site of Franciscan missionary encounter, an American Indian presence continued in the region, albeit contained by the 1890s on fifteen separate reservations in the city's outskirts.[28] Anglo-Americans generally followed an "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" mentality when dealing with Indian/White relations, content to ignore the poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to adequate medical care or food and shelter among California's Indians. Helen Hunt Jackson's scathing account of

[28] Kenneth R. Martin, "The First Residents," in *San Diego: An Introduction to the Region*, second edition, Philip R. Pryde ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1984), 57-60. The Mission Indian Relief Act, passed in 1891, established by 1895 fifteen reservations. Another two were formed in 1931.

government policies toward American Indians, *Century of Dishonor* (1881), heightened some sensitivities, but even in the midst of a growing reform movement, the *San Diego Union* published this inflammatory editorial calling for curfews among local nations:

> The squaws frequent the back streets after night for the purpose of indulging in immoral practices for gain, and they are driven to it, it is said, by the bucks who live off their earnings; in many places Indians are forbidden to come within town limits after nightfall; an ordinance to that effect here would be a good move.[29]

Citizens passed the ordinance within the week, a blatant sign that they accepted pejorative stereotypes that miscast American Indian women as "squaws" — ugly drudges who commanded little respect among their own people — and misplaced blame for Indian poverty on a lack of initiative by the "bucks" who seemingly refused to work.[30]

Anglos living in San Diego feared any sort of interaction with American Indians, registering complaints in the 1870s that their children had to attend school with "natives."[31] If an Indian child appeared at the Home, its matron would immediately call Father Ubach, a Roman Catholic priest who ministered to reservation residents.[32] His visits to the Home were rare (only twice between August 1889 and November 1903) for a couple of reasons: first, American Indians did not live in town, therefore, they did not have access to the services offered at the Home; and secondly, the Indian community preferred to manage the care of an illegitimate or abandoned Indian child to shield her

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[29] *San Diego Union*, 14 November 1884, 3:2.

[30] On the sexualization of American Indian women and Anglo perceptions of that phenomenon see Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," in *Unequal Sisters*, 15-21; Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), especially pages 169-192; and Sherry L. Smith, "Beyond Princess and Squaw: Army Officers' Perceptions of Indian Women," in *The Women's West*, Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 676.

[31] Teresa Baksh McNeil, "St. Anthony's Indian School in San Diego, 1886-1907," *Journal of San Diego History* 34, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 187.

[32] Nancy Scoones Miller, "The Blessings of Bureaucracy: Indian Education in San Diego County, 1848-1947," (Masters thesis in History, San Diego State University, 1992), 101. A Spaniard, Father Ubach arrived in California in 1860 and was ordained in San Francisco. He served at a variety of parishes in Northern California (San Juan Bautista, Watsonville, Marysville) and in Los Angeles before receiving what would be his permanent assignment in Old Town in 1866. He died on March 27, 1907 and continues to be honored as a friend of the San Diego Indians.

from Anglo prejudice and institutions.[33] In an odd way, hatred by Anglos offered Indian children a kind of protection from institutionalized care.

Arguably, part of that protection came from St. Anthony's Industrial School for Indians, opened in 1886 and funded by the nationally-situated Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. The School operated in Old Town for five years before Father Ubach relocated it to a more remote — and friendlier — location on Mission San Diego de Alcalá property. A boarding school, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet trained ninety to one hundred children each year in vocational trades and Catholic dogma.[34] The children may have been sheltered from the taunts of the town, but as historians point out, Indian boarding schools ripped children away from their parents and homes to learn a foreign culture and standard of living.[35] Harsh punishments awaited students who rebelled from that system. In the case of St. Anthony's, English-speaking nuns indoctrinated their young charges in the benefits of Catholicism and tightly defined gender roles, using shame to keep the children in line. Boys learned to plow and plant fields while girls received training in harvesting the crops and domestic work. When the administrator, Sr. Octavia, caught two girls trying to run away from St. Anthony's, she cut off their long hair as punishment.[36]

To his credit, Father Ubach kept many children healthy and off San Diego streets where they were subjected to physical abuse and mental torment by racist Anglo locals. Moreover, the nuns at St. Anthony's cared for all children in need of shelter, and the School developed a reputation for taking in poor Mexican children.[37] But the children worked hard for the "privilege" of attending St. Anthony's; by 1893, the children cultivated 120 acres of land on which they raised vegetables, fruits, grain and cattle to

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[33] SDCCa 12 and 386/387/388.

[34] Baksh McNeil, "St. Anthony's Indian School," 194-95.

[35] Anderson, *Changing Woman*, 45-56; and Trennart, "Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools," 224-237.

[36] Baksh McNeil, "St. Anthony's Indian School," 195-197.

[37] Ibid., 197.

support the school.[38] The School closed in 1907, a casualty of bureaucratic consolidation. Clearly, options for quality care that honored the cultural heritage of these children did not exist in San Diego in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The 1880s represent a time of intense fluctuations in the economic security of the city. San Diego's "boom" of 1885 went "bust" by 1889, repelling those same hordes of Anglo newcomers to their homes in Oklahoma, Texas, Nebraska and other points east. An estimated seventeen thousand people left the city by the close of the decade. Children became casualties of both the exodus and unruly living as mothers and fathers deserted their families and abandoned their children.[39] Many who chose to stay sought relief from homelessness and hunger through public funds. In 1887, the San Diego Benevolent Association held four to five thousand dollars in reserve, but within one year, their financial holdings registered zero after assisting three hundred families and many single individuals. Forced to declare bankruptcy, relief work continued (albeit at a smaller level) through the County Board of Supervisors and private contributions.[40] A review of relief records shows that only Anglo families received County-approved funds, and many of these requests were for travel money to return them to their eastern and midwestern homes.

The exodus from the city forced organizers to re-evaluate city planning, a precarious infrastructure, and job opportunities. That agenda increased the importance of developing social welfare programs. Starting in the 1890s, a number of charitable organizations began operating in San Diego. Along with the Woman's Home Association, branches of the Salvation Army and the Children's Home Society of

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[38] Ibid., 195.

[39] Nine incidences of abandoned children turned up at the Home between March 1889 and January 1902. See cases SDCCa 10/11, 12, 32, 42/43/44, 54, 102, 266, 315/316, and 470.

[40] The Board of Supervisors took on an increasingly greater role in organizing city assistance as it was responsible for maintaining the combination almshouse/hospital, and financing the care of orphaned children. *First Annual Report of the County Hospital and Poor Farm of San Diego, California for the year ending June 30, 1889* (San Diego: San Diego County, 1889) as cited in Cyrus Wayne Stephens, "The History of Social Welfare Agencies in San Diego County, 1872-1914," (M. A. thesis in Social Work, San Diego State College, 1966), 4, 8.

California (a national organization that found permanent homes for orphaned and abandoned children) opened San Diego offices in 1888. The next year, the city attempted to form an Associated Charities, but that effort would not be solidified until 1909. In the meantime, the Door of Hope opened a rescue home for girls in 1893, and one year later, benevolent women organized the San Diego Free Industrial School to occupy the days of girls and boys living along the waterfront.[41] That same year, the Helping Hand Home began housing destitute families, particularly those with members diagnosed by the county physician.[42] Single women moving into the area motivated the start in 1900 of a Traveler's Aid Society and King's Daughters Home.[43]

In 1903, the Boys and Girls Aid Society began its mission to save children from a life of delinquency by providing orphans, half-orphans or abandoned children with temporary housing. San Diego became one of the first cities in California to institute a probation service, and the Boys and Girls Aid Society became the holding site for these delinquent children.[44] Jewish relief efforts united in 1905 with the formation of the Federated Jewish Aid Society, and the YWCA joined the other women-helping agencies in 1907 by creating a branch in San Diego.[45] All of these agencies and organizations tried to relieve the growing stress caused by an unsettled economy, and the establishment of the Associated Charities (AC) helped to coordinate their efforts.

Into and throughout the Progressive Era, the "Stingaree" caused problems for San Diego officials hoping to market the city as a wholesome area to raise a family. In 1888, D. Gochenauer, M.D., Health Officer for San Diego, waxed optimistic for San Diego's future health environment, but noted that the "dark, close, chilly and unhealthy rooms" in

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[41] Lucien C. Atherton, "Vocational Side Lights," *Parent-Teacher Courier*, February 1943, 12; and Endorsement files, Family Service Association of San Diego Collection [hereafter FSASD], Special Collections, SDSU..

[42] *Helping Hand Home for Children*, SDHS Info files, Box 64/29; and Stephens, "History of Social Welfare," 23. Sanitary conditions at the County Hospital were so poor that the Board of Supervisors began instructing the county physician to admit all sick or injured persons to the Helping Hand Home rather than the hospital.

[43] Stephens, "History of Social Welfare," 26.

[44] Ibid., 27.

[45] Ibid., 28 and 35-36; and SDHS Info files, Box 65/37.

the Stingaree needed special attention to combat the "many cases of colds, diseases and even death" found in the area.[46] Ridding the Stingaree of disreputable people and their way of life became the primary agenda of civic leaders only after it was chosen as the site of the 1915-16 Panama-California Exposition. In general, San Diego authorities used a policy of containing vice within the Stingaree district. But rumors of child pornography and prostitution stirred the community to more direct action far earlier.[47] Fueled by the local media, complaints of child prostitution caused police to begin arresting suspected madams, and ultimately led the Woman's Home Association into their reform work.[48]

Child-saving fitted nicely into the problems facing San Diegans, and middle-class, white women became important organizers and distributors of relief for San Diego families. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) first organized a committee to aid sick, helpless or unemployed women in 1884.[49] By February 1887, WCTU members voted to separate the committee from their organization, creating a wholly new and secular social service program for San Diego women and children.[50] Organized as the Woman's Home Association (WHA), it remained connected financially and administratively to the WCTU and its membership. Ecumenical in its outlook, organizers invited area churches to each select one representative to serve as Anna Gunn

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[46] *First Annual Report 1888, City of San Diego* (San Diego: C.J. Hildreth, 1889), 18.

[47] For how San Diego officials attempted to clean up their red-light district see Ciani, "Surviving Through Prostitution, 90-102;" Clare V. McKanna, Jr., "Prostitutes, Progressives, and Police: The Viability of Vice in San Diego, 1900-1930," *Journal of San Diego History* 35 (Winter 1989): 44-65 and "San Diego's Stingaree," *True West* (July 1985): 56-59; and Elizabeth C. McPhail, "When the Red Lights Went Out in San Diego," *Journal of San Diego History* 20 (Spring 1974): 2-28.

[48] The *San Diego Union* published numerous articles on the subject of white slavery during 1887 and 1888. The courts began to listen to their public, and on October 22, 1889, police arrested Carrie Johnson on the charge of enticing a fourteen-year-old, unmarried girl (Jessie Dixon — a name which proved felonious) into her home for purposes of prostitution. The first recorded charge of attempted rape occurred in 1890, when Charles E. Forsythe was arrested for allegedly raping Ethel M. Hunt who was "under the age of fourteen." See San Diego Justice Court Case Files, 1889, 1890, SDHS for details of these cases; and Ciani, "Surviving Through Prostitution," 93-98 for analysis of the phenomenon of white slavery in San Diego. Mary Odem's work, specifically *Delinquent Daughters,* is the most complete analysis of the fear in Southern California prompting the regulation of female adolescence during the Progressive Era.

[49] "Report of the Woman's Home Association and Day Nursery, San Diego," February 1, 1890, Woman's Home Association Collection [hereafter WHA], Documents File, SDHS.

[50] Stephens, "Social Welfare Agencies in San Diego County," 9.

Marston's Vice President.[51] Yet, while advocating a religiously tolerant stance, the members of the Woman's Home Association remained Protestant, white, and middle class.

The WHA specified in its Articles of Agreement that it would focus on helping two groups of people:

> 1. Children of tender years not of vicious character or afflicted with any infirmity to such an extent that the Home cannot properly care for them; and
>
> 2. Such indigent women as from temporary sickness or other temporary cause are unable to care for themselves.[52]

WHA leaders believed their organization needed to maintain a flexibility that allowed them to add, change or close programs as reflected by community needs. That ideology, published in their 1891 report, stated that their work "[had] not been carried on after any definite model or preconceived plan but [had] been adapted to meet the immediate needs of the time as they have arisen."[53] That philosophy carried into the twentieth century, and while admirable, did little to ensure an adequate cash flow for their operations. The establishment of child care, employment agencies, and medical care cost more than WHA members anticipated. Consequently, they turned to their husbands and other businessmen for operating cash to continue their work.

Association programs quickly expanded as post-boom destitution settled in rather than left San Diego. In 1888, the WHA opened two new departments of relief, the Woman's Industrial Exchange and the Day Nursery, as programs geared specifically to helping wage-earning women. The 1890 report explains that "very soon it became apparent that the needs of working mothers would be better served by providing a home

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[51] Ibid., 10. Anna Gunn Marston and her husband, George White Marston led benevolent and reform movements in San Diego throughout their adult lives. Married in May 1878, the Marstons enjoyed financial success through land speculation in the 1880s, and became the primary philanthropists in San Diego. See Greg Hennessey, "George White Marston and Conservative Reform in San Diego," *Journal of San Diego History* 32, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 230-253.

[52] "Articles of Agreement organizing Woman's Home Association as a Corporation," July 22, 1890, WHA.

[53] "Report of the Woman's Home Association and Day Nursery," February 1, 1891, WHA.

for their children by the week or month, and since that time the institution has been practically a Children's Home."[54] Thus, the name "Day Nursery" was generally a misnomer, because from the day it began receiving children (August 16, 1888), the Home accepted children who needed long-term boarding arrangements rather than simply daily care. The average stay of children between 1889 (its first full year of admittance) and 1905 (the last year of complete information for this period) was six months.[55] So, in essence, the facility operated both as a boarding home and day nursery. Moreover, in caring for orphans, the Home became San Diego's solution to the need for an orphanage and foster home until adoptions could be arranged.[56]

Like many clubwomen across the nation, the members of the Woman's Home Association and Day Nursery committed themselves to shaping children's' characters. Education played a role in boarders' lives from the start, as organizers made arrangements with the public school Kindergarten to furnish a teacher for the Home. Dr. Charlotte Baker, child advocate and physician who served the poor in San Diego, visited the Home daily to examine the children and provide free treatment.[57] The motivations of WHA members coincided with many club women operating in the late nineteenth century: they hoped to both save children and help women who found themselves in unfortunate situations. Child-saving work introduced them to the project of stabilizing the lives of women who had no man to provide for them. Their 1890 Report reflects this sentiment:

> This work is designed not only to benefit the children, but especially to meet the needs of a class of women who find themselves without

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[54] "Report of the Woman's Home Association and Day Nursery," February 1, 1890, WHA.

[55] Figure calculated on a ten percent sample of the 586 entries from 1889 through 1905. The sample includes the full range of children's ages staying at the nursery (one month to ten years) and the variety of care situations (from one day to three years).

[56] From September 1888 to October 1905, the Home's register listed 591 entries of children (This does not mean that 591 different children entered the Home; 85 of these entries represent children returning to the facility for a second, third or even fourth stay). Between 1909 and 1915, 196 households turned to the Home for child care; and by 1919, the facility annually took in about one hundred children.

[57] "Report of the Woman's Home Association and Day Nursery," February 1, 1890, WHA; and Robens, "Charlotte Baker," 71-72. Baker only accepted pay for her job as medical examiner for the State normal school.

> immediate means of support and the only providers for their helpless children. By this class the Nursery has been best appreciated.[58]

In San Diego, this "class of women" only included White women. A very few Mexican women were served but they usually had ties to the Anglo community through marriage.

WHA members prided themselves on giving these mothers a chance to work and secure "the comforts of a home" for their families. They accepted the fact that some women had to earn wages, and believed in the power of earning one's way in society. Of course, the women who belonged to the WHA did not earn wages, making the following statement in the 1890 Report an interesting one:

> [These women] while feeling safe about their children in the Nursery, have been convinced that by assuming a part of this expense they were working at far better purpose for themselves and their little ones than if attempting to maintain them continuously at home.

Ultimately, the WHA believed that the "aim" of their work was "to be helpful to the last degree, but at the same time to encourage self-respecting self-support."[59] It cost "above $3/week" to board a child at the Nursery, however, no mother's fee came close to covering that expense. According to WHA records, mothers paid the Association whatever they could afford, although those mothers considered destitute were charged nothing. This practice forced WHA members into a continual mode of raising funds to keep the Nursery equipped and operational.

The work of the Woman's Home Association proves the existence of female-headed households and wage-earning by women in Victorian San Diego — a phenomenon that has been downplayed or even ignored by many historians of San Diego County — and reveals the attempted involvement of employers to provide child care.[60] In his history of the Woman's Home Association, Richard D. Sexton attributes the

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[58] "Report of the Woman's Home Association and Day Nursery," February 1, 1890, WHA.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Richard Pourade's seven-volume history of San Diego has been considered the mainstay for local history; however, his references to women are limited to one page on women's suffrage in volume 5, *Gold in the Sun*, and paragraphs on "women of note" throughout the series. David F. Selvin gives no mention of women workers in his book *A Place in the Sun: A History of California Labor.*

creation of the day nursery to concerned businessmen anxious about absenteeism among their *male* workers. However, Sexton makes clear that this motivation cannot be traced through the documentary record, and I reached the same conclusion in my research.[61] According to Sexton, "oral tradition" records that these businessmen offered the Association approximately twenty-five thousand dollars in exchange for establishing a day nursery.[62]

Unfortunately, the motivation behind this philanthropy remains hazy; yet the Home's Register from 1888 to 1905 shows a number of interactions between fathers and nursery staff, indicating that San Diego fathers were both aware that the facility existed and used it to solve their child care problems. The Register cites thirty-eight instances of fathers using the Home. Their reasons for seeking institutional help included spouses who had died, deserted or divorced them; wives interned in either the County Hospital or the "insane asylum;" or women imprisoned in the state penitentiary. While a few men released their children to adoption, most retained custody while making regular monthly payments for their children's care.[63]

Mothers, though, remained the primary users of the Home, especially as they continued to enter waged labor in San Diego.[64] The jobs among these women reflect the pre-industrial state of San Diego. Most of the women recorded in the Home files listed some form of domestic service (such as waitressing, sewing, laundry work or private domestic service) as their occupation. The mother of seven-year-old twins, Joseph and

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[61] Richard D. Sexton, "The San Diego Woman's Home Association: A Volunteer Charity Organization," *Journal of San Diego History* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 41-53.

[62] Ibid., 44-45.

[63] Information gathered from the full set of 586 entries in the 1889 - 1905 register.

[64] Directories for San Diego County from the years 1885 - 1920 show a marked increase in the numbers of women entering waged labor. To my knowledge, no one has tackled the project of systematically calculating these increases. My assessment is derived from working with the directories to verify data gathered from primary source material. Figures do exist for the year 1920 in "Table 118.—Women Employed in Certain Selected Occupations, For Cities Having From 25,000 to 100,000 Inhabitants: 1920," in Joseph A. Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations 1870 to 1920, Census Monographs IX* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1929), 216. San Diego employed 7,603 women in all occupations in 1920. The three highest occupations were Clerks and Saleswomen (in stores), 730; Servants, 732; and Teachers, 634.

Amelia Anderson, chose to "take work home and keep children."[65] She originally took only Joseph to the Home (on March 19, 1890) but delivered Amelia two months later. But on that May day, she picked up her son and left her daughter. By June 19, Mrs. Anderson returned to the Home to claim her daughter. She paid nothing to the Home for her children's care, and in uncharacteristic fashion, the Home made no comment other than "No pay."[66]

The Home also served as a safe place for poor women — both married and single — to deliver their babies. After a married woman delivered her son on March 2, 1891, the Home gave the new mother and baby a bed free of charge through their time of confinement.[67] Unmarried women learned that the Home could be a safe and reliable place to take their babies for adoption. One woman delivered her son at the Home where the child stayed for six weeks. She then "gave" him away to "people at San Pasqual," probably a ranching family who could use the labor of another boy.[68] Boarding arrangements and payment schedules seemed to be fairly loose. Depending on the parent's economic situation, a parent could pay from $2 - $5 per month for each child. Lizzie Burr began boarding her five-year-old son at the Home in August 1896, continuing this arrangement for a few years. She originally paid them $8 per month, but in February 1898, the Home reduced his board to only $6 per month.[69] We can only guess at the reasons for the price reduction; Burr worked in the home of a prominent San Diego official so perhaps his influence played a role in the fee, or the boy may have worked at odd jobs around the Home to off-set his boarding expenses.[70] Whatever the reason, the extra $2 per month allowed this mother and child to continue living together in the same town, giving Burr the chance to retain her parental rights. The Home also employed

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[65] SDCCa 34/35.

[66] Comments in the Register (and later on case files) generally made some kind of assessment as to why no payments had been received.

[67] SDCCa 69.

[68] SDCCa 103. Cases 112 and 116 also provide examples of single women delivering at the Home and putting their children up for adoption.

[69] SDCCa 167.

[70] *San Diego City Directory* 1895.

mothers as cooks and nurse's aides in exchange for a child's board and a small stipend. For the years 1888 through 1906, sixteen women made this arrangement.[71]

Following national trends, as the century neared an end, WHA leaders grew more concerned with the mental and emotional state of the nation's children. Morality and the lack of education deeply concerned them. In its review of work in 1899, the Association reported:

> Their [the children] moral training has been as much in our thoughts as their physical welfare. For the children of today will be the law-makers of the next generation; the children of today will also be the law-breakers of the next generation. The influences of youth mold the trend of character.[72]

Although religious instruction did not enter the daily routines of children at the Home, assistants led the children in Christian prayer each morning and evening. Its Protestant roots also took hold in naming board members, matrons, and nursery staff. Jewish and Catholic parents, in general, did not use the Home. Instead, Home staff would refer them to the Catholic League of Women or the Ladies Hebrew Aid Society, organizations which usually provided cash and grocery aid so that mothers could stay in their homes rather than work for wages.[73]

Client/staff interaction at the Home offer some clues to the larger relations between parents, city officials, and charitable organizations. With an average population of 18,000 from 1890-1900, San Diego did not require the kinds of day care services that major cities such as Chicago or even Detroit offered; but asking one facility to fulfill day- and full-time care stretched the resources of the Home too far. When city officials began to evaluate San Diego's position as a site that could support manufacturing, resort, and naval operations, the Home came under scrutiny by professional family case workers.

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[71] SDCCa 70, 104/105, 123/124, 202, 258, 264, 268, 274, 284, 320/321/322, 365/366/367, 377, 385, 390/391, 449, and 560.

[72] "Women's Home Association Review of the Work," December 1899, SDCC, Box 5, Series IV-Scrapbooks.

[73] Minutes of the Associated Charities Advisory Council in San Diego reflect this practice. The Advisory Council never discussed the situations of these families, but rather referred them directly to the appropriate religious organization. Minutes are located in Box 1A of the FSASD collection.

But even after these criticisms, the Home remained the primary institution dedicated to the boarding and caring of children.

Three critiques in the early twentieth century helped San Diego's business, social welfare, and political leaders assess the situation: *The Pathfinder Social Survey* (1914), published with help from the Russell Sage Foundation; *Community Welfare in San Diego* (1929), a collaborative project of private, city, and county concerns; and *How Mexicans Earn and Live* (1933), number five of the University of California "Cost of Living Studies," which analyzed the incomes and expenditures of one hundred Mexican families living in San Diego.[74] These reports, while not dedicated to child care resources, devoted attention to the problems generated by a city moving into an industrial mode: namely, mothers entering the workforce; a continual influx of transients (many of whom had children); and the lack of day care facilities in San Diego. Investigators' findings brought San Diego officials into conversations regarding service provisos, and served as a foundation for recognizing the changing needs among the city's diverse community. No longer the paradise promoted so strongly by Anglo leaders, San Diego authorities began dealing with educating, protecting, and honoring all children of the working class.

Healthseekers and the critique of San Diego services

At the turn-of-the-century, San Diego civic leaders tried to invigorate the sagging economy by promoting the temperate climate to white, middle-class healthseekers. They tapped into the international interest in all things classical especially by emphasizing the natural landscape, using Mediterranean visions to their best advertising advantage.[75]

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[74] Edith Shatto King and Frederick A. King, *The Pathfinder Social Survey of San Diego* (San Diego: Labor Temple Press, March 1914); George B. Mangold, *Community Welfare in San Diego* (San Diego, 1929); and Heller Committee for Research in Social Economics of the University of California and Constantine Panunzio, *How Mexicans Earn and Live: A Study of the Incomes and Expenditures of One Hundred Mexican Families in San Diego, California* (Berkeley: University of California, 1933).

[75] Many southwest towns promoted their clean environments as ways to attract white, middle-class families to their communities. See Iris H. W. Engstrand, "In Search of the Sun," in *California Light, 1900-1930*, Patricia Trenton and William H. Gerdts eds., (Laguna, CA: Laguna Art Museum, 1990), 53-59; and Anne Farrar Hyde, *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1990).

Seeking relief from consumption or convention, midwestern and eastern travelers relocated their families to a town heretofore uncontaminated by industrial manufacturing or political machines. Alternative religious groups, such as the Theosophical Society, created a lavish haven for their followers on the outskirts of the city, while sickly newcomers rested on San Diego's shores.[76] San Diego remained free of the trappings of industrial cities; with no factory output, little railroad transportation, and a seemingly homogenous population, the community projected an ideal setting in which to raise a healthy, albeit Anglo, family.

Town promoters were delighted that their campaigns attracted such "desirable" citizens to their community, and by 1908, conservative estimates counted the population at 42,500 persons. Healthseekers included a tightly knit cadre of Progressive reformers forced to move west to cure tuberculosis or weak hearts. These included Daisy Lee Worthington Worchester, Edith Shatto King, and Mary Hill, who had traveled with their husbands to settlement house projects in New York City, Pittsburgh, Boston, and St. Louis before venturing to the professionally immature San Diego. They encouraged single friends to join them, such as San Diego's first case worker, Alice Adams Robertson. As a group they actively sought to professionalize social welfare activities in the city.[77] Alumnae of socially-informed colleges like Vassar and Wellesley, these professionally-trained women held careers alongside their husbands. Some, like Edith Shatto King and Helen Marston, grew up in San Diego and left to attend colleges in the

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[76] Evelyn A. Kirkley, " 'Starved and Treated Like Convicts': Images of Women in Point Loma Theosophy," *Journal of San Diego History* 43, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 1-27; and Pourade, *Gold in the Sun*, 21-38.

[77] The Hills were the first to arrive in San Diego. Mary Hill graduated from Vassar and started settlements in New York and Louisville, Kentucky. She persuaded the Kings to help her organize an Associated Charities, when in 1909 they moved to San Diego for Fred's tuberculosis. Even though he was sick at the time, he became the first secretary of the San Diego Associated Charities. Alice Adams Robertson previously worked with the Worchesters at the Associated Charities in Colorado Springs. She recommended Wood Worchester as King's replacement when he became too ill to continue his responsibilities. Doctor's orders for Daisy's weak heart, "rest at sea level," solidified the career move. See Daisy Lee Worthington Worchester, *Grim the Battles* (New York: Exposition Press, 1954), 149-151; Shelton, "Neighborhood House of San Diego," 32; and Stephens, "History of Social Welfare Agencies in San Diego County," 44.

East. They returned to bring professional standards to San Diego's benevolent operations. Others, like Daisy Lee Worthington and Mary Hill hoped the clean air would enliven their husbands or themselves to recover from illness. Whatever their reasons for choosing the city, they became some of the strongest critics of the fledgling social welfare system in San Diego. But they also became some of the hardest workers in changing that system as they developed the College Woman's Club, coordinated surveys, organized the Associated Charities (AC), and established a settlement house and day nursery.

Promotional literature described an idyllic San Diego, but residents grounded in the day-to-day reality of San Diego life understood that not all the newcomers satisfied promotional ideals. The city's Health Officer reported in 1908 that, "so many invalids are attracted to our climate, many coming too late when other means have failed."[78] The children entering the San Diego Children's Home embodied this phenomenon. Like many others, Sylvia Webber's two daughters moved to the Home in December 1911 after tuberculosis left her unable to care for them.[79] In another example, Mrs. Bigarelli sent her two older sons to their aunts in Michigan and enlisted the aid of the AC to find homes for her younger boy and girl so she could rest. Convinced that finding a home for the girl would be much easier, the AC petitioned the Home to take the boy.[80]

For the years 1909-18, two-parent households were the minority of those families using the Home for child care. Out of 196 households, only forty-two, or twenty-one percent, of these families represented two-parent households. Of those, seven parents did not live at home after being either incarcerated or hospitalized for insanity. Table 9

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[78] "Annual Report of Health Officer for year 1908," Box 40, folder (San Diego City Health Dept. Annual Rpt. 1901, 04, 05, 08, 09) in the San Diego County Department of Public Health Collection [hereafter SDPH], SDSU Spec. Coll.

[79] SDCC, Box 8, 1909-1918, Case 52. The San Diego Home for Children began using a case record system in 1909. Hereafter, cases from 1909-1918 will be referred to as SDCCb plus the case number (i.e. SDCCb 52). Cases from 1919-1924 can be located in SDCC Box 9 and will be referred to as SDCCc; cases from 1925-1929 are filed in SDCC Box 10 and will be referred to as SDCCd.

[80] FSASD, 12 April 1912.

demonstrates how most of the children boarding at the Home came from unstable environments that incited strained relations within their family.

Twenty-four fathers and nine mothers deserted their families; eighteen households had undergone a divorce; and twenty-four couples were separated. Seven mothers were too sick to tend their children and six unmarried women admitted their children for boarding. Twenty-four widows and twenty-one widowers used the Home as a strategy to keep their family together. The Home defined thirteen children as orphans and two children as half-orphans.[81]

Table 9: Family Status of Children at the Children's Home, 1909-1918

Situation	Number of Children	% of Total Households (196)
2-Parents in Home	42	21.5
1-Parent in Home	154	78.5
Widows	24	12.0
Widowers	21	10.5
Fathers deserted	24	12.0
Mothers deserted	9	4.5
Divorces	18	9.0
Separated	24	12.0
Sick mother	7	3.5
Unmarried mother	6	3.0
No Parent in Home	13	6.5

Source: SDCC, Box 8, 1909-18 Case records.

In August 1910, the Advisory Council of the Associated Charities reported that County Supervisor Fisher issued a verbal appeal for the Council to take a greater interest in finding room for "homeless or ill-treated" children who, "through no fault of their own," found themselves living in the Detention Home run by the Boys and Girls Aid Society. Mrs. Miles, Children's Home superintendent, "spoke with regret of the fact that

[81] Numbers derived from SDCCb case records.

such children are not placed" in her facility. By 1910, crowded conditions often prevented her from accepting some children; plus, they tried to steer children marked as "delinquent" away from the Home and into institutions which could contain this problem group. All children needed to be certified through a physical exam that they were free of contagious disease, which often proved enough reason for denying children a Home bed.[82]

The outbreak of the Mexican Revolution could have also affected overflow at the Home if San Diegans had been open to receiving Mexican children in that facility. They were not. The Mexican Revolution caused intense turmoil among Mexicans living on both sides of the border. It also gave Anglo reformers an excuse to avoid helping the Mexican community in San Diego. Fearing a breach of national security, members of the Associated Charities Advisory Council believed that Mexican nationals should return to Mexico even if their homeland was in the throes of military and civilian violence. Upon her husband's death, one Mexican mother of eight refused to return to her husband's native Ensenada, insisting the Council help find transport to her relatives in La Paz, claiming it was "more remote from the dreaded Revolution."[83] Minutes from Council meetings indicate that they feared subversive activity in this family and simply wanted them out of San Diego. Where the family ended up was of little interest to the Council. Likewise, when the Council received an appeal for County support from a young widow of the Revolution who had also lost her baby ten days earlier, Council members refused support and advised her to return to friends in Tijuana.[84] By Spring 1916, the police reported regular arrests of Mexican men, and continued surveillance of the Mexican community. Hence, the establishment of the day nursery at Neighborhood House gave Mexicans a place to take their children and Anglos the security that Mexicans would not be mingling needlessly with their children in the public schools or the Children's Home.

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[82] FSASD, 19 August 1910.
[83] FSASD, 20 March 1914.
[84] FSASD, 19 June 1914.

For Progressive reformers, "broken" families using social service like the Children's Home exemplified the kind of scourge caused by urbanization. San Diegans began to take a more serious look at the social conditions in their city, but they continued to be more interested in how their public persona would appear to the outside world. Leaders concerned themselves with ridding the "Stingaree" of vice, the bay of sewage, and the streets of public waste in order to attract commerce, manufacturing, and resort visitors. Indeed, city officials wanted San Diego to shine once the Panama-California Exposition opened in 1915.[85] It is within this constellation of clean-up campaigns that the College Woman's Club entered the arena of social welfare and child care in San Diego.

By the 1910s, secure railroad connections allowed for a steady growth in agricultural trade and manufacturing which led to a change in the industrial makeup of the city. San Diego also housed the largest tobacco plant on the Pacific Coast, mining attracted men from every corner of the country, and the burgeoning lemon and lime trade kept workers of all ages employed in packing containers for market. Aviation created jobs for both the middle - and working-class, as did the newly-installed military bases. Women workers pressed olives for the booming trade in olive oil, pieced together brooms, and fashioned ostrich feathers into fine apparel.[86] In 1910, the tuna industry evolved into San Diego's most successful manufacturing enterprise. Canneries depended on female labor for low paid, seasonal work; conditions that seldom allowed cannery workers to support an entire family on their own. Many of the workers came from families entrenched in all facets of tuna processing. Portuguese fishermen dominated the tuna trade, while Italian and Mexican boats shared the remainder of the catch. Gone for months at a time, their wives, mothers, and daughters managed the home in their absence. These women also worked in the canneries cleaning and packing fish for distribution.

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[85] Richard W. Amero, "The Making of the Panama-California Exposition, 1909-1915," *Journal of San Diego History* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 1-47.

[86] Pourade, *Gold in the Sun*, 111.

Sometimes, young children joined their mothers and sisters on the packing floor or running errands for cannery supervisors.

Housing conditions in San Diego did not mirror those of the urban squalor in the East; however, out of five hundred places inspected in 1912-13, officials ordered two hundred closed to residential living.[87] One report described the area in detail:

> There are distinctly slum conditions in San Diego in shacks along the water front and among the Mexicans, negroes and whites in the tenement houses and cottages of the district south of F Street, and west of Sixteenth Street to the water front. One instance was given of a tenement which housed four rooms . . . They [Mexican families] were living in such places, not from choice, but from the fact that these places offered cheap rates . . . It is difficult for poor Mexicans to secure cheap rents in San Diego, consequently they crowd themselves and several families into some old house or unsanitary shack. Some of these latter are presented to the view of the tourist on arriving.[88]

Businessmen worried that these views could discourage potential healthseekers from staying in San Diego, so they appealed to the health inspector to raze the shanties. They also feared that their advertisements of healthy living would no longer attract stable investors. To be sure, by 1916, the Annual Report of the Department of Public Health admitted, "It is now a well established fact that San Diego offers little to the tubercular, in fact such cases frequently do poorly here."[89] The climate may have been ideal, but for many residents, San Diego was not the *Ultima Thule*.

A steady influx of unskilled workers looking for jobs on the Panama-California Exposition building project aggravated the social and economic problems caused by the chaos of the late nineteenth century. Concerned merchants quietly lent their assistance to residents less fortunate: the Starkey Drug Store notified the Associated Charities that it would honor any prescription sent through the AC at wholesale rates; the Pioneer Truck Company agreed to haul any "reasonable amount" of wood to the homes of San Diego's impoverished; Rev. Barnes made arrangements with the Imperial Restaurant to feed relief

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[87] Shatto King and King, *Pathfinder Social Survey*, 11.

[88] Ibid., 12.

[89] "Annual Report of the Department of Public Health for the year 1916, " SDPH.

applicants processed by St. Paul's Episcopal Church; and a downtown dentist, "Painless Parker," offered to pull teeth for AC patients free of charge.[90] When a local newspaper requested permission and assistance in photographing some of the city's more "miserable homes," the Associated Charities rejected their proposal. Perhaps AC officials wanted to maintain the confidentiality of their clients, or maybe they remained unconvinced to the value of such sensational journalism.

In the same meeting, the committee "highly approved" a project to start a "Child Welfare" column in one of the daily papers, even though they did not feel it warranted the female author earning a stipend for the piece.[91] Thus, they decided that for some children life in these "miserable homes" could be improved if the public was made aware of their situation. As with many Progressive reformers, they used the media to publicize the problems of the growing city. But the key to change in San Diego came in 1911 with the establishment of the College Woman's Club (CWC), an organization that evolved into a chapter of the Association of American University Women.

The chief concern of CWC members involved the management of social welfare institutions. Members learned that well-meaning but untrained benevolent women led the few services offered in San Diego, a situation that jarred the professional sensibilities of CWC women. In an effort to professionalize these associations, members consulted with *Survey* Editor, Paul U. Kellogg, and Shelby M. Harison of the Russell Sage Foundation to find a trained team of investigators who could perform a survey that outlined the social needs of the city. Not surprisingly, the group chose one of its own when it contracted with Edith Shatto King and Frederick King. Their findings, published in 1914 as *The Pathfinder Social Survey of San Diego*, was the first document produced by the social work community in San Diego.[92]

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[90] Minutes of Advisory Committee of the Associated Charities from 25 February 1910; 25 March 1910; 10 June 1910; 8 April 1910, in FSASD, Box 1A, 1909-1912.

[91] FSASD, 8 September 1911.

[92] Stephens, "History of Social Welfare," 48.

The Kings' investigations fell into eight categories: public health and sanitation; public education; recreation; delinquency; industrial conditions—foreign population; betterment agencies; civic improvement; and taxation and public finance. Strident in their critique of health care, social services and labor conditions, the Kings warned San Diegans of their "undeveloped state of social consciousness and unconcern of many of its citizens for the needs of the whole." They called for the creation of a coordinated agency that would organize "a definite social program for the whole community," emphasizing that some groups — like Mexican Americans — continued to be overlooked by existing agencies.[93] A minority of power-brokers agreed with this perspective. In fact, according to Daisy Worchester, politics proved the culprit in San Diego's ignorance of social needs in the community. Worchester blamed a "corrupt" Board of Supervisors for the lack of concern toward the needy and charged that they make "certain that every dollar which was spent [on the poor] would do a dollar's worth of good for them and their political aspirations."[94] Despite charges of political finagling, the Kings praised the budding community of social workers, calling them "fresh and vigorous" even in the absence of any training to handle social problems.[95] So while they honored the intentions of some San Diegans, their assessment of social problems in the community revealed that little improvement could be reached with only good intentions.

High infant mortality rates posed special concern for San Diego reformers; in relation to that of other cities, however, mortality from child diseases remained low in San Diego. In 1913, eighty-five babies died before reaching the age of one year. One hundred and thirty-five children under the age of five also died that year. The Kings explained: "This is perhaps not large compared with the infant death rate in eastern industrial cities, but it is far too large for a city whose natural advantages and size should

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[93] Ibid., 4.

[94] Worchester, *Grim the Battle*, 150.

[95] Shatto King and King, *Pathfinder Social Survey*, 3.

make ideal conditions for babies."[96] They suggested that the city implement a visiting nurse program whose professionals would train mothers in the proper care of infants and solutions. Their other solution for curbing infant mortality was to establish a free day nursery "where working mothers can leave their babies in the care of trained nurses while away from home."[97]

The investigators argued that while large sums of public money were relegated to educating (hence, caring for) school-age children, "irreparable injury" had already occurred due to a general lack of care and proper nutrition. According to the Kings, mothers needed to be trained; in fact, the report blamed mothers for these deaths, stating that "it is safe to say that at least half, probably more [deaths], could have been prevented if mothers had been taught the proper care of their children, and if there had been a safe milk supply."[98] They further chastised the women and doctors of the city for not entering into public debates about the purity of the milk supply, charging that "the women and doctors of the city are to blame, for if they do not personally come before the Council in support of proper ordinances, these conditions will continue to exist."[99]

Real Solutions to Child Care Problems

The solutions in *Pathfinder* blur the class differences among Anglo San Diegans by assuming that working-class Anglo women held the same kind of power as middle- and upper-class women in the city. Moreover, the solutions ignored the racial and ethnic segregation separating Anglo middle-class authority from poor families with little power to create change. In all, *The Pathfinder* strategies grouped those women whose children became infected by impure milk and improper nutrition with women who had the political resources to go before the City Council and argue a convincing case for tighter

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[96] Ibid., 17.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 18.
[99] Ibid., 9.

controls. Language also became a critical barrier because many families who stood to benefit from activism spoke Spanish, Italian, Chinese or Portuguese, while those arguing for change spoke only English. Thus, the problems of impure milk could not be accurately understood by the women campaigning for change. But most importantly, those able to fight for change in San Diego simply chose not to dedicate their advocacy to child-related issues. While club women in Los Angeles were leading the fight for pure milk in their city since 1908, club women in San Diego focused their energies on purifying behavior by attending, instead, to problems in the Stingaree district, namely ending prostitution and gambling, and reducing the number of saloons and taverns.[100] Limited numbers of activist women in San Diego forced club organizations to carefully choose their fights and reforms, resulting in the choice to eliminate vice.

Communicating with families proved critical to improving conditions, however, The *Pathfinder* never suggested this as a solution. In fact, it overlooked the work already under way in trying to reach those most vulnerable to sickness, in particular, the Mexican community. For instance, the practice of using bilingual "friendly visitors" to help these families had been in place since the formation of the Associated Charities in 1909. Catholic Church leaders understood that many of their parishioners spoke languages other than English (usually Spanish, Portuguese or Italian). In an effort to break through language barriers, clergy connected their parishioners with bilingual agents. At the December 30, 1909 Advisory Council meeting, the friendly visitor for the Associated Charities reported her plan to keep an Anglo/Mexican family together. Part of that plan included convincing the oldest boy to quit his night job, return to school, and stay at home in the evenings. The agency also wanted to keep the baby in the home rather than placing her in a boarding arrangement. Father McNellis, the Catholic church's representative on the Advisory Council, agreed with the plan and pledged that his church

[100] Judith Rafferty, "Los Angeles Clubwomen and Progressive Reform," 144-174. Through her involvement with the Los Angeles Friday Morning Club, Katherine Philips Edson led the crusade to insist on health inspections of cows providing milk to the city. She was also the woman responsible for bringing kindergartens to Los Angeles.

would send $5 per month for several months to the family to help with expenses. He also promised to "send a young lady from his church who speaks Spanish to call on the family" to explain the proposed assistance.[101]

In October 1913, the Advisory Council admitted the need for a Spanish-speaking case worker and invited the only bilingual friendly visitor known in San Diego, Miss Goldie Primrose, into their committee.[102] The Council did not always understand concerns of Mexican residents, but they did attempt to serve bilingual needs in the community, predating the Kings' lecture in *The Pathfinder.* Yet, prejudices persisted even among those San Diegans supposedly dedicated to easing severe conditions for all citizens. In a report on infant mortality to the Associated Charities on November 18, 1910, City Physician Dr. Francis Mead concluded that infant mortality among "Americans" was low, but "high among Mexicans who are hopelessly ignorant."[103] Mead's report was also silent on the status of other minority groups left to fend for themselves such as the Chinese, African American and Indian populations.

Infant mortality signaled the growing problems among San Diego's working poor, including inadequate day care. Those women in need of a free day nursery represented some of the worst problem cases. Between 1909 and 1918, women using the Home were victims of desertion, tuberculosis, and low wages. On September 5, 1914, Opal Thompson arranged to pay the Home $12 to care for her two children. Her husband, "a drinking man," deserted the family, forcing Opal to "work out."[104] Justine Oake's husband died July 3, 1913, leaving her with four children, ages thirteen to seven years. Although he had made a good living as an electrician at the Electrical Equipment Co. and took precautions by purchasing a Metropolitan Life Insurance policy, his death surely forced Justine to gradually admit their children to the Home.[105] By December 1916, four

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[101] FSASD, 31 December 1909.
[102] FSASD, 10 October 1913.
[103] FSASD, 18 November 1910.
[104] SDCCb 53 and 54.
[105] SDCCb 9. The Oakes moved to California from Chatanooga, Tennessee in 1911. At the time of

Oake children lived at the Home. A ledger notation, "Turns over to us money she receives from State," as well as discharge arrangements suggest that Justine received a Mothers' Pension, and that she hoped her use of the Home would be temporary. Not all of her children seemed content with living in the Home; her thirteen-year-old son, Theodore, left the facility on his own accord after only a one-month stay. The Home decided to permanently discharge him to his aunt on February 9, 1917. The two youngest stayed at the Home until October 14, 1918.[106] It took Justine Oake five years to stabilize her family, and without the help of her sister, it would have taken much longer.

Findings in the survey also overlooked fathers' struggles to keep their families intact. Miles Griffin stayed home tending their baby while his wife worked at a restaurant from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Born out of necessity, the couple came to this arrangement only after "experts" dismissed their other options as bad parenting. In December 1909, Mrs. Griffin had applied to board their baby at the Home when her mother, who had been caring for the child, was unexpectedly forced to enter the workforce. The Griffins decided the best option for their family would be for Miles to relocate to San Francisco and use his skill as a carpenter to secure work and a position in the union. But an AC friendly visitor discouraged him from this move. In her report of January 14, 1910, the visitor explained that she found Griffin "washing and ironing and taking care of the baby," and that she had "advised him to remain in San Diego and take care of his family."[107] That perspective fit the trend during the Progressive Era to keep families together, whatever the cost. In this case it meant that Miles Griffin sacrificed steady work, earnings, and his assigned role as financial provider in order to keep their baby out of an institution.

Professionals like the Kings tended to compare San Diego services to those offered in eastern cities, often failing to understand the strengths of a small structure.

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his death, her husband, Luther, was forty-one and Justine was thirty-two. The timing of their move and his death suggests that he was fighting tuberculosis, although, this is pure speculation.

[106] SDCCb 9.

[107] FSASD, 14 January 1910.

The close-knit business and social community could easily rally support for a new endeavor, and parents seemed to be as equally at ease with those in power. Parents did not passively await assistance, but rather, actively maneuvered throughout the growing system of public and private resources. Mrs. Fiedler, a single mother, illustrates the way in which some parents pursued their right to parent in the way they felt comfortable. Fiedler became the subject of discussion at AC meetings in the Fall of 1912 because she allowed her daughter to "run wild in the streets," causing the AC to advise her to "by all means put the child in the Children's Home." Fiedler agreed, but nearly one year later she asked the committee to send her home to New York where, she believed, more institutions existed for her to place her children, "thus lightening her burden and leaving her freer to work."[108] Mrs. Fiedler peddled wares on the corner of the Plaza in downtown, but police citations forced her to sell only at night, which proved deadly for business. The committee, anxious to get her out of their jurisdiction, agreed to look into assistance programs in New York.

In its effort to reform San Diego, the Kings missed the one-on-one interactions that occurred behind the scenes in the meeting rooms and offices of the Children's Home and the Associated Charities. By 1913, the Children's Home became more than a boarding home and day nursery as it served as an entry point for committing some children to the juvenile detention center.[109] Parents caught on to this technique, and rebelled against the intrusive nature of family case work, but their complaints often fell on deaf ears. When the AC learned that an anxious mother, Mrs. Hedrick, reportedly "visits her children at the Children's Home and upsets them by talking about wanting to take them away," the AC agreed that a worker should meet with the upset mother. The directive to the staff member emphasized that troublesome parents posed problems for agencies trying to work with children. They ordered her to:

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[108] FSASD, 29 November 1912; 25 April 1913; and 10 October 1913.

[109] FSASD council minutes reflect this attitude.

> Influence her to leave children in the Home unless investigation shows that she is able to take care of them in her own home. If State aid can be secured for children, woman should choose an alternative and not worry the Home any longer.[110]

Workers concerned with the smooth operation of their busy facility, found that an anxious parent could certainly ruffle nerves. Not surprisingly, the Home staff seemed reluctant to include parents in decisions regarding their children's care. Hedrick did not give up, and four months later she was "still causing annoyance at the Children's Home by her talk about taking her children away." Perhaps because of this mother's persistence, the committee agreed that state aid should be secured for the children, and "that they be given into Mrs. [Hedrick's] care."[111] State aid was secured, but the children remained in the Home while the State paid $6.25 per month for each child. Obviously, social workers in the Home believed that Mrs. Hedrick could not adequately care for her children, but neither could the Home. On March 6, 1914, one of the Hedrick children died. The other two, Ernest and Martha, remained in the Home until September 16, 1914.[112]

Another mother, Mrs. Walling, pestered the AC office until she heard the answers *she* wanted to hear. Having fallen ill and unable to care for her children, Walling asked the Home to take in her children; but apparently they had no room, especially for a woman who could not pay for their board. The AC suggested to Walling that the County Supervisors could provide her with an allowance equal to the amount spent if the children boarded in the Home. But Walling did not see her problem as a financial one. The office reported that she called:

> [P]rotesting that she is not in health to take care of her children even if the means should be provided; she expressed gratitude for the provisions sent by the County through this office but insisted that she wants the children placed in a home.[113]

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[110] FSASD, 31 July 1913.

[111] FSASD, 21 November 1913.

[112] SDCC, Box 17, Register 1914. According to the Home Register, they admitted three children on June 30, 1913 with an agreement that their mother would pay $10 per month.

[113] FSASD 27 March 1914, 3 April 1914, and 17 April 1914.

The Council understood this exchange to mean that Mrs. Walling had released her children for adoption, whereby they proceeded to find permanent placement for the children. Livid when she discovered what the Council meant to do with her children, Walling flatly refused to give her children over to adoption proceedings, and within two weeks she had found work and a place to live.[114]

In general, members of the Advisory Council of the AC used ideas about the strength of the nuclear family when making judgments about children's' lives. School Visiting Nurse, Miss Cox, reported that a student, Marguerite Reynolds, "ought to be taken from so unsuitable a home; mother tubercular and alcoholic; living with a man named Bechtold; pregnant."[115] She further described the girl as under-nourished and suffering from a general neglect that affected her medical and dental health. Mrs. Miles, the Children's Home representative for the AC, stated that the girl would probably enter her facility if the "mother could be prevented from interfering."[116] Marguerite entered the Home, but the Council's judgment about her mother's living arrangement proved ill-founded. Bechtold, a deckhand for the U S. tugboat *Harris,* never missed a payment for the two years Marguerite spent at the Home.[117]

Despite these kinds of misjudgments, most professional sanctioning occurred in the spirit of helping children lead healthy and happy lives. The study performed by the Kings proved key to engendering change, starting with their recommendation to establish a day nursery. On February 25, 1910, the Central Council and Board of the Associated Charities first posed the question "Does San Diego need a Day Nursery?" The Council decided, however, to take up the issue "later," leaving the project for members of the College Women's Club to organize in 1914.[118] That project, Neighborhood House

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[114] FSASD 24 April 1914; and 8 May 1914.

[115] Ibid.; and 24 October 1913.

[116] Ibid.

[117] SDCC, Box 17, Register 1914; and 1914 San Diego City Directory. Child admitted April 1, 1914 and discharged March 2, 1916. Payments were $10 per month.

[118] "Minutes of Central Council and Board, 1909-1913," FSASD, Box 1.

settlement, provided a variety of services to Mexican children including day care, free milk, and physical exams. It also offered a safe environment for workers' children by removing them from Anglo taunts. The barrio protected children from prejudicial harassment; yet it also isolated Anglos from the poverty inherent in the barrio thus contributing to the stereotype of the poor, lazy Mexican. Some forward-thinking Anglo women tried to change these attitudes among their neighbors by living at Neighborhood House and listening to Mexican families. Even though African Americans had also moved into Logan Heights by 1914, Neighborhood House focused on helping Mexican and Mexican American families. Black families would not feel welcome at the settlement until the late 1920s.

All descriptions of Barrio Logan emphasize its poverty. Laura Rodriguez, who worked at the Chicano Community Clinic in the 1970s, grew up in the barrio and remembered it stood in "the midst of the cruelest kind of poverty."[119] Life along the waterfront presented little in the way of comfort or convenience. Smells from the fish canneries and soap factories competed to annoy residents; human and animal waste was left untreated as the last in a long line of sanitation priorities; and homes consisted of "shacks and dilapidated buildings" with no indoor plumbing.[120]

Opportunities for education were mostly unavailable to barrio children. The one school in the area, the San Diego Industrial School, trained girls in domestic service and boys for factory work. In general, the school accepted Portuguese, Italian, and Mexican children who lived in or near the waterfront area.[121] Rather than a school to teach educational basics, concerned citizens designed the Industrial School in 1897 as a way to keep immigrant adolescents off the street and train them in vocational trades. Anglo women ran the facility on a volunteer basis, and as such, they limited its hours of

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[119] As quoted in Shelton, "Neighborhood House of San Diego," 36.
[120] "Annual Report of Public Health, 1915," SDPH.
[121] Dittmyer and Grant, "Historical Study of Neighborhood House," 32.

operation to after school and Saturdays.[122] Consequently, many children living in the barrio spent their days in the community either working at the canneries or at other odd jobs in the laundries or cigar factories.

By the early twentieth century, some San Diegans feared that many of the younger children were being left unattended, and *The Pathfinder* survey only confirmed their fears. Members of the CWC decided to take on the problems of Logan Heights as a demonstration of what their involvement could bring to San Diego. According to social work historians Scott Dittmyer and Kathryn Grant, establishing a settlement was not a top priority with the CWC Social Service Committee. Members initially voted on sponsoring a dance hall or working with the Probation Court to help curb the growing problem of juvenile delinquency. The dance hall project would keep adolescents off the street, occupied and supervised; and members likely believed it a manageable project for them to tackle. Why the group switched its thinking is unclear, but the larger project of establishing a settlement house prevailed, and they began researching which location in San Diego presented the greatest need.[123]

It was that research which led CWC to commission the Kings to analyze the city, and from those findings, the CWC chose the Logan Heights neighborhood. They felt certain that their professional training could make a difference in the lives of people living in Logan Heights, and in 1914, the group opened a center on 14th Street near Market, just one block north of the San Diego Industrial School. Edith Shatto King accepted the job as head resident, a position she would keep for only one year, resigning in December 1915 because of her husband's illness.[124] In a short time, volunteers from the Industrial School contacted the CWC, inviting them to move their program into the Industrial School. Within two years, and as a result of the "many neglected-looking

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[122] Ibid. When the facility opened in 1897, citizens were concerned about Portuguese, Italian, and Mexican immigrant children. By 1914, most of the Portuguese and Italians had moved away from Logan Heights, making it a predominantly Mexican neighborhood.

[123] Ibid., 32.

[124] Ibid., 33.

children playing in the streets," CWC members also established a kindergarten in connection to the day nursery at Neighborhood House.[125]

Neighborhood House organizers took their cues from *The Pathfinder* survey when developing settlement programs. They addressed the problem of infant mortality among Mexican families by opening an infant welfare station staffed by visiting nurses who distributed pure milk and taught mothers and daughters proper hygiene. Mary Hart Taylor, RN, a public health nurse in charge of the city's child hygiene division, opened a milk station and baby clinic at the House in 1916.[126] Two years later, she established a Little Mothers Club to train young girls pre- and- post-natal care, and started a program to test Mexican children for "subnormal mental and physical development."[127]

But the first few years proved troubling for Neighborhood House and its clients. Prejudice and disease were the culprits: suspicious Anglos worried about the presence of so many non-Americans; measles and pneumonia leaped from the soldiers stationed at Camp Kearney and raged through the barrio; and the flu epidemic of 1917 hit the Mexican community particularly hard.[128] In an effort to prevent another outbreak of measles, diphtheria and flu, the settlement took advantage of newly-available federal grant money through the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917.[129] The Act granted states the funds to promote education in agricultural-related industries and among agricultural workers, and enabled the settlement to hire a woman to teach foreign mothers American cooking and sewing.

By the 1920s, most families who used the services offered at Neighborhood House were Mexican, yet a small group of African Americans began visiting the center. Not unlike settlements across the nation, staff segregated African Americans from contact

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[125] "Neighborhood House, 1916" in Box 1A, Endorsement Files, FSASD.

[126] Annual Report of the Department of Public Health for the year 1921," SDPH; and Dittmyer and Grant, "Historical Study of Neighborhood House," 34.

[127] Shelton, "Neighborhood House of San Diego," 41.

[128] Dittmyer and Grant, "Historical Study of Neighborhood House," 39-40; and Shelton, "Neighborhood House of San Diego," 39 and 44.

[129] Sandra Schackel's analysis of agricultural extension work in New Mexico explains the importance of federal grants to maternal education. See Schackel, *Social Housekeepers*, 111-139.

with other groups and devoted Saturday nights to "the colored people."[130] Kindergarten classes at the House expanded in 1920 to two daily sessions, with the curriculum emphasizing English so that the children could better perform once they entered public school.[131]

As with settlement houses throughout America, Neighborhood House helped San Diego improve the health of its poor, especially among infants and children. The Public Health report for the year 1921 noted the recognition by the American Child Hygiene Association that San Diego had the third lowest infant mortality rate among cities with a population of 50,000 to 10,000. The report credited Mary Hart Taylor for much of the success as well as the cooperation between the Women's Federated Clubs, the Women's Civic Center, the College Woman's Association, the Parent Teachers Association, the Associated Charities, church aid societies, school nurses, and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company nurse.[132] Taylor attributed the success to Mrs. Charles Brackett, an "untrained assistant" at the Neighborhood House milk station, who spoke fluent Spanish and possessed an "intimate knowledge of the home life of the Mexican."[133] Thus, by the 1920s, professionals began to realize the importance of bilingual interaction even if that communication came from "untrained" personnel.

For the year 1924, the infant mortality rate declined from 59 to 54.7 deaths for children under the age of one year per 1,000 children born alive. This compared to a national average of 79.3 for cities 50,000 to 100,000 (San Diego had an estimated population of 96,445 in 1924).[134] But according to local historian Cynthia Jane Shelton, while the rate for the general population declined, infant and maternal morbidity among Mexicans continued to rise. Between 1922 and 1932, only 28 percent of Mexican women

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[130] Shelton, "Neighborhood House of San Diego," 50.

[131] Ibid., 46.

[132] Page 7 in "Annual Report of the Department of Health to the Mayor of the City of San Diego for the year 1921," in SDPH.

[133] January 31, 1922 letter to Dr. Alex M. Lesem, Health Officer and Superintendent, Department of Public Health in report cited directly above.

[134] "Annual Report of the Department of Health to the Mayor of the City of San Diego for the year 1924," in SDPH.

in San Diego delivered their babies in a hospital as opposed to 68 percent for all other groups. *Puerperal septicemia* (infection related to childbirth) caused 44 percent of deaths among Mexican mothers, a figure two and one half times greater than for any other race or ethnicity living in San Diego. Infant deaths among Mexicans were double that of any other group. In the ten-year period, Mexican babies represented 27.5 percent of all infant deaths even though they comprised only 14 percent of all local births.[135]

After her appointment in 1930, the new director of Neighborhood House, Anita Jones, focused on these health and education problems. Jones, a social worker, spoke fluent Spanish and came to San Diego with previous settlement experience as Director of the Mexican Immigrants Protection League at Hull House in Chicago.[136] With a 90 percent Mexican clientele, Jones' expertise had been long missing. She orchestrated the building of new facilities including a medical clinic which opened in 1933, and helped reduce the infant mortality rate between 1931 and 1936 in southeast San Diego by 50 percent.[137]

Jones also applied to the federal government for Neighborhood House to receive designation as a WPA nursery school. As one of four federally-funded nursery schools in San Diego, Neighborhood House personnel used their interaction with the children as a way to Americanize Mexican families by preparing and serving standard American meals to attendees.[138] While instructors devoted many hours to teaching their charges English, they also developed a unique feature at Neighborhood House, teaching Spanish to Mexican American children. By the 1930s, pressure to learn English forced many parents to avoid teaching their children Spanish, and in fact, they encouraged them to learn only English. Neighborhood House staff believed, however, that the children should be able to read and write in both languages, and they set about trying to correct the

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[135] Shelton, "Neighborhood House of San Diego," 71.

[136] Ibid., 93-95; and Dittmyer and Grant, "Historical Study of Neighborhood House," 48. Jones received an A.B. from the University of Texas and a Masters degree in social work from the University of Chicago.

[137] Shelton, "Neighborhood House of San Diego," 96.

[138] Ibid., 100.

situation.[139] But staff continued to guide young Mexicans into service sector jobs rather than prepare or even encourage them for academic education. Instead, girls took a housemaids' class which prepared them for employment in household service, learning to operate electric appliances, home nurse, cook, clean house, serve tables, and care for children. Boys learned to handle machines to help secure them a factory job.[140]

Like any other settlement, Neighborhood House depended on volunteer help. They turned to one of the wealthiest groups in San Diego, the Junior League, for help with its day nursery but prejudices quickly stopped any further connection between the two. As one observer described the situation, "The League expressed some interest in giving volunteer service to the Neighborhood House but because of their prejudice towards Mexicans it did not seem practical."[141] Neighborhood House staff and volunteers opened a kindergarten and day nursery, established a milk station and child welfare clinic, and began to teach English to its "friends" within this complex interplay of race and ethnic relations. Surviving the turmoil of staff turnover, a flu epidemic, and racist agendas to close the center, their success was measured in longevity.

Federal Intervention in San Diego's Child Care System

The havoc wreaked by the Great Depression brought national attention to San Diego, and investments by the federal government proved vital to offering social services, including child care. The passage of the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) in 1933 saved many workers in San Diego — professional and unskilled — from turning to local agencies for assistance with securing food, housing, employment, and child care. Before federal intervention, that help came from local benevolent associations, many of which made a special effort to provide child care to needy parents. Day care options

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[139] Ibid., 99.

[140] Ibid., 101.

[141] "Field Notes, March 19, 1934, Recreation/Settlements/Neighborhood House," in AJLA, Box 68, folder 688 (San Diego, CA 1945).

expanded from both the infusion of professional expertise and collaboration by San Diego employers and settlement workers, but like Detroit, a parent's gender, class, race, ethnicity, and religion guided the direction that social workers and educators gave to a parent.

The formation of the San Diego Coordinating Council in 1935 was one way in which the federal government joined with local forces to influence the way in which the community began dealing with children and adolescents. In San Diego, the County Probation Department and the City Schools used Works Progress Administration funds to create the first council.[142] Its key concern was combating juvenile delinquency, and after WPA funds were withdrawn in November 1937, the city schools took over responsibility for counseling San Diego adolescents.[143] The area in which the federal government had the greatest impact in San Diego (and nationally), however, was in its funding of emergency nursery schools. San Diego did not house the number of day nurseries operating in Detroit that took advantage of WPA funds, however, these grants still proved critical to the expansion of day care in the city.

Aid came from a variety of sources, including privately-funded organizations and public agencies. The Parent Teacher Federation established nutrition centers in the public schools for undernourished children, and the Junior League of San Diego continued the tradition of white, wealthy women donating time to children's causes by opening a day nursery in 1927.[144] Located "in a tenement district of poor dwelling houses, near the edge of the Mexican section," parents paid fifty cents a day per child. The day nursery opened with only four children in attendance but within the first year volunteers cared for an average of twenty-two children, Monday through Saturday;

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[142] Harry Rexal Flesher, "A Historical Study of the Coordinating Councils Movement in San Diego County," (Masters thesis in Sociology, San Diego State College, 1964), 31-32.

[143] Ibid., 37-38.

[144] "Minutes of June 10, 1931," San Diego Community Chest Records, 1929-31, Volume 3, in the United Way of San Diego Archives.

however, although the nursery had the capacity to care for thirty children, its average attendance throughout its tenure was sixteen children.[145]

The League did not turn away children if their parents could not afford the fee. In fact, they made a policy of bumping children who could afford the nursery in order to make room for those families in desperate situations.[146] Since the nursery seldom reached its capacity of thirty children, the League never resorted to dismissing children, still that policy led professionals to criticize the League and its work. Social workers believed that clients should accept the responsibility of paying for all or at least part of the cost of caring for their child; otherwise, the day care became a form of relief and contributed to a family's dependency rather than its independence. The League's acceptance of a mother's dependence countered current thinking regarding the lines between accepting relief and maintaining self-respect. In her dissertation on day care in Philadelphia, Elizabeth Rose provides a good explanation of the fine lines walked by social workers and wage-earning mothers during the Depression. Women applying for free day care seldom understood their requests as relief since they did not receive cash in return, while social workers saw the practice of giving some women day care a form of in-kind relief.[147]

Moreover, social workers attached to the Junior League national headquarters criticized the League for using untrained volunteers who had no or little understanding of family case work.[148] An earlier critique in 1929 by Berkeley sociologist George Mangold outlined several improvements for the Junior League nursery: first, expand recreational facilities at the nursery; second, maintain better supervision of the children; and third, increase medical attention to help isolate communicable disease. Mangold also

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145 "Field Notes, Children's Field/Day Nursery," 1, AJLA., Box 68, folder 688.

146 Ibid., 1.

147 Rose, "Maternal Work," 250-256.

148 "Field Notes, Children's Field/Day Nursery; and "Field Notes, Project/Day Nursery," in AJLA, Box 68, folder 688.

recommended that day nursery attendants make home visits, and suggested that the League commit more volunteers to their project.[149]

By 1932 the League began to question the need for their nursery, even offering their building to the city as a WPA site; but the federal government "turned them down" claiming they did not want to "set up a nursery in an already existing agency."[150] Considering they used Neighborhood House as a nursery site, federal officials more than likely objected to the lack of professional input at the Junior League Day Nursery. Since 1930, officers from the League's national headquarters recommended to the San Diego chapter that the nursery hire a professional supervisor, and for a period of months in 1935, a social worker did oversee the League operation. According to field notes in March 1935, the League complained of rising costs, low attendance, and the resignation of their supervisor. They claimed that the nursery had, "become a parking place for the children and as such is much too expensive an agency . . . the average daily attendance is nineteen and costs about $365 a month."[151]

Members of the League seemed ready to give up their day care responsibilities three years later when in April 1935 they embarked on a number of studies to assess community needs. While these studies affirmed the need for their day nursery, they still closed the facility on August 15, 1936. Ten children were attending the nursery when it closed, so the League "assumed responsibility for working out under professional direction" alternative care for them. In the case of two children, the League paid for the children to live in boarding homes.[152] In spite of closures like the Junior League Day Nursery, day care was still needed in San Diego, especially for non-Anglo children. But an influx of "expert" studies and reports did little to create concrete solutions.

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149 Mangold, *Community Welfare in San Diego*, 130.
150 "Field Notes, Project/Day Nursery," 1-2 in AJLA, Box 68, folder 688.
151 Ibid., 4.
152 Ibid., 2.

California remained particularly concerned with the steady stream of Mexican immigrants into their state, and a number of reports were published during this period to analyze the situation.[153] The Heller Committee for Research in Social Economics of the University of California used San Diego as one of a series of Cost of Living Studies compiled to understand the effects of the Depression on various groups of people. That study, *How Mexicans Earn and Live: A Study of the Incomes and Expenditures of One Hundred Mexican Families in San Diego, California*, focused on the clients using Neighborhood House. While it provides good information about a small segment of Mexican-heritage people living in San Diego County during the Depression, it also demonstrates the dilemmas of using professional studies to re-create the historical experiences of understudied or misunderstood peoples.

First, the committee chose San Diego as a study site because, through a personal contact, they could easily collect data; not because the families living in San Diego represented, in their minds, the "average" or even "typical" Mexican family in California. The director of Neighborhood House, Constantine Panuzio, a graduate of Berkeley's School of Sociology, maintained a relationship with Berkeley faculty, and invited the committee to San Diego. The study's investigators included Neighborhood House staff and teachers for the San Diego Public School adult classes in English. As outlined in the report, "the families visited were either personally known to the investigator or were neighbors or relatives of families already included."[154]

Secondly, conclusions in the study rested on inaccurate assumptions made about San Diego's Mexican-heritage population. The committee wanted an urban group which could easily fit into a comparative model that used Detroit families as the standard as published in a 1930 *Monthly Labor Review* (MLR) study.[155] In an attempt to maintain

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[153] The most influential being *Mexicans in California: Report of Governor C.C. Young's Mexican Fact-Finding Committee* (San Francisco: State Building, October, 1930); and Heller Committee, *How Mexicans Earn and Live*.

[154] Heller Committee, *How Mexicans Earn and Live*, 5.

[155] "Standard of Living of Employees of the Ford Motor Company in Detroit," *Monthly Labor Review* 30 (1930): 1209-1252.

the research parameters in the Detroit standard, analysts found that Mexicans in San Diego did not live as well as families in Detroit. But those conclusions were flawed by the fact that control groups dramatically differed in each city. The Detroit study included only those families in which earnings came solely from a male head-of-household who worked at least 225 days in 1929 and earned at least $7 per day. Households could not include boarders or extended family, and children living in the household had to be under sixteen years of age. Parameters of the Heller study, while defined by ethnicity, included a far broader economic group. Requisites included that only one of the parents be Mexican; the family resided in San Diego for the twelve months preceding the investigation; both parents were alive and living in the home; and the family included at least one child.[156]

Those San Diego families may not have lived as well as the Ford Motor Company families, but we can infer little more from the data. As historians of Detroit history have shown, there were far more employers present in the city than simply Henry Ford. The agenda of the Heller Committee in producing this study apparently was to target the level at which Mexicans could adjust to the American experience. As advocates for the Mexican migrant, they worked to explain how these families struggled to remain independent through dedicated industriousness. Beyond that, data parameters pay little analytical attention to racial and gender occupational segregation in the two cities.

The greatest difference lay in the fact that the Detroit research did not include any households with women wage earners. While the Heller report included these households, it offered little analysis of the problems facing these female workers. Nearly half of the women in the San Diego households (forty-four) earned wages to supplement the family income. Most of this work was "irregular" and "part-time," but it still represents a dramatic departure from the MLR parameters. Tuna canneries employed most of these women (thirty-two); five worked as shop clerks; two labored in laundries;

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[156] Heller Committee, *How Mexicans Earn and Live*, 5.

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[156] Heller Committee, *How Mexicans Earn and Live*, 5.

one woman was a cigar maker and another sewed for a living. Only one woman listed clerical work for pay while one woman assisted in the family store without pay.[157] Certainly, some of these women supported young children that needed attention while they earned a wage. Again we can turn to the history of Neighborhood House for insight to how some parent workers found day care in San Diego during this time.

Many families who visited Neighborhood House made their living through the tuna industry. Consequently, when exploitive catch practices depleted fishing pools in the late 1920s and the Depression caused a total shut-down in 1932, those families used federal relief and private charity to survive. In 1933 funds from the National Recovery Administration helped the tuna industry to experience a small comeback, inviting a consortium of canneries to request that the Neighborhood House Association operate a day nursery for its workers' children. Neighborhood House served a primarily Mexican-heritage population which, in 1933, numbered 9,266 or 6.3 percent of San Diego's total population.[158] Aside from work in laundries and olive factories, many of the women from families living in the Logan Heights District worked in the tuna canneries. Out of forty-four Mexican women noted as wage-earners in the Heller Committee Report, thirty-two worked in the canneries at cleaning and packing fish.[159] Funded jointly by the canneries, the College Woman's Club, and the San Diego Community Chest, the Neighborhood House nursery had been functioning for months when it secured FERA funds. The nursery operated under the auspices of an emergency nursery school, providing day care services by staying open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.[160]

Yet, unemployment fears continued to plague cannery workers. In 1933, the relaxation of tariffs allowed an influx of Japanese tuna into the American market which

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[157] Ibid., 11. It is perhaps instructive to note that the report referred to the store as "her husband's store."

[158] Ibid., 4.

[159] Ibid., 11.

[160] Dittmeyer and Grant, "Historical Study of Neighborhood House," 45-46; and letter from Anita Jones (director of Neighborhood House) to Lillie M. Peck (secretary, National Federation of Settlements), April 25, 1934, Box 26, folder 244: California, San Diego, Neighborhood House, 1926-49 in NFSDN.

only exasperated the plight of the fisherman's family. The local newspaper *San Diego Sun* reported in its December 6, 1933 edition that the "dumping of hundreds of thousands of cases of tuna on the American market . . . struck a virtual death blow at a once-lucrative market" and dramatically affected the way fishermen could survive.[161] They also reported that all canneries planned to close down indefinitely on December 10 when the tuna boats tied up. The *Sun* reporter, hoping to rouse a sympathetic ear, interviewed twenty-two year-old Jenny Castagnola and her nineteen-year-old sister, Benny, as typical workers in need of the canneries. He described them as both "pretty girls" and "expert workers" among the 217 other female operators who "make good wages during the 200 days the plant is in operation." He emphasized that "like 3/4 of the men and women who work in this plant, [the sisters] are contributing to family support."[162]

But the reporter ignored the story of cannery workers who performed triple duty as mothers, wives, and wage-earners. Few people in the 1930s felt sympathetic to married women who worked, for that meant she had taken a job away from a man. Vicki Ruiz argues in her history of cannery work in Northern California, that child care united Mexican female workers with their Anglo co-workers in "various efforts to secure suitable babysitting arrangements."[163] According to Ruiz, this "cross-ethnic bridge" became the most significant interaction between female operatives in the canneries. In San Diego, women from Italian, Mexican, Portuguese, and Japanese cultures worked in the canneries. While language barriers and prejudice — particularly against Asian women — kept some women separated from that bridge, many operators made their first cross-cultural friends with fellow cannery workers.

Fears of the canneries abandoning the city never panned out; in fact, according to Anita Jones, the steady work provided by the canneries throughout the Summer and Fall

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[161] William G. Bray, "A Doomed Local Industry," *San Diego Sun*, 6 December 1933, located in the California Room at the San Diego Public Library.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*, 35.

of 1935 brought "more income than usual" to the families using the services of Neighborhood House. Jones also noted how the 1935 California-Pacific International Exposition contributed to this situation, and she worried that its close would bring a dreaded slump to the city.[164] But San Diego boosters had been courting the United States Navy for nearly twenty years, and on November 6, 1934 the *San Diego Union* could report the following economic relationship:

> Today San Diego boasts a total capital investment of $28,000,000 in naval establishments, with an annual naval payroll of $30,000,000 [of an annual naval appropriation of $300,000,000]. We should protect this great investment and keep this vital payroll.[165]

Another important movement for San Diego child care came in the midst of these New Deal programs when the city began to regroup. City leaders fell to time-tested methods of promoting their city by using the nursery school to attract middle-class parents to the 1935-36 California-Pacific International Exposition hosted by San Diego.[166] Located in the Palace of Education in Balboa Park, the FERA nursery school shared star status with models of the Palomar Observatory designed by scientists from California Institute of Technology.

Exposition promoters promised that visitors could view a "live" exhibit of nursery school children learning in the basement of the Palace. Visitors could observe through a one-way mirror twenty small children playing and interacting with one another and their teacher.[167] Children attending the demonstration nursery school did not come from working-class families, but rather, were middle- and upper-class children. Regardless, the Exposition exposed child care and parent education in an unprecedented way to San Diegans.

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[164] Letter from Anita Jones to Lillie M. Peck, October 16, 1935, NFSDN.

[165] Cited in Lotchin, *Fortress California*, 3.

[166] This was not the first time a nursery school had been an exposition attraction. The Chicago World's Fair promoted it in 1893, and the 1915 San Francisco Exposition also showcased nursery schools. I thank Sonya Michel for pointing out this trend to me.

[167] *San Diego Union*, 29 March 1936, III, 11:1. I thank Balboa Park historian Richard Amero for sharing this citation with me.

Touted as an educational advance, the demonstration nursery school introduced hundreds of Exposition visitors to the benefits of early childhood education. Once the Exposition closed, the equipment and learning materials were transferred to the newly-built campus at San Diego State College where early childhood educators continued the work that had been exhibited at the Fair.[168]

World War II population surges

The rise of defense production and general support of major military installations throughout San Diego County provided a healthy economic structure for San Diego residents into the 1980s. It also caused an incredible in-migration of military personnel and their families, as well as, shipyard and airplane manufacturing plant workers. San Diego's 1930 population of 147,995 swelled from 203,341 in 1940 to nearly 500,000 by 1944, leaving the city hard-pressed to suitably accommodate its newcomers. The rush to erect housing led to homes with no indoor plumbing, infestation of rats and roaches, and greatly inflated food prices.[169]

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[168] WPA funds helped build most of the exposition buildings that remain permanent structures in Balboa Park; however, the nursery school and its equipment were housed only temporarily in the Park. See page seven of the transcript of Michael Milligan interview of Aileen Birch and Beryl Campbell , July 22, 1994; and pages 117-119 of the Heather Kufchak interview of Isabella Hammock and Beryl Campbell, November 5, 1985 in the San Diego State University Oral History Collection [hereafter SDSU Oral], San Diego State University Special Collections [hereafter SDSU Spec. Coll.], Malcolm A. Love Library, San Diego State University.

[169] Ruth Martin to Kimberly A. Hall, February 1993, SDSU Oral, "Women During World War II." Hall's interviews provide a central piece of research for her masters thesis, "Women During War: Responses to Situations in San Diego, 1941-45," (San Diego State University, 1993).

Ruth Martin's letter is unique to this collection of taped interviews. Compared to the other interviewees, her situation seemed the most severe among in-migrants. Most of the women interviewed stated that living conditions were crowded and haphazard, although they all seemed to take it in stride. For instance, Louise Johnston moved from Oklahoma with her husband to San Diego at the end of 1940 and seemed oblivious to the overpopulation. Mrs. Johnston stated that, "I was so in love with my husband and we were thinking of each other and we just weren't that interested [in the overpopulation] like I would be now." Mrs. Martin, on the other hand, had strong feelings about her one year stay in San Diego (actually, National City, which is about ten miles south of downtown San Diego). In 1944, Mrs. Martin came to San Diego with her husband, Frank, a Petty Officer First Class stationed at San Diego Naval Station. She did not appreciate the treatment she and her family received in San Diego, and wrote to the interviewer: "Don't alter it, it should be known there were miserable times for some."

Executive secretary of the Associated Charities of San Diego, Eleanor Mead,[170] revealed some of the problems facing her organization in 1940:

> The national defense program is . . . even more aggravated [than the Norfolk situation] . . . Agencies, city fathers, city and county departments, federal agencies are all going to it and we are trying not to let it run away with us completely. The aircraft industry is one of our biggest problems, and the families coming for work, no homes for them, and traffic is terrific for our little town. But we still have our sunshine, our poinsettias, fifteen feet high — and hope that eventually there will be some peace for this world.[171]

The entry of the United States into World War II on December 7, 1941 would forever change San Diego from a "little town" into a major city.

Fifty thousand people arrived in 1940 alone to work in the defense industry, swelling the number of San Diegans working specifically in defense to ninety thousand.[172] That phenomenal growth would directly affect the need for day care since women — many married with small children — comprised forty percent of the workforce in 1945.[173] In-migration influenced many changes in San Diego from physical layout to population growth, but one unique change was the shift in the female workforce. Historians have chronicled that in eight of the ten "war-impacted" areas studied by the Women's Bureau the number of women workers doubled from 1940 to 1944,[174] but in

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[170] Eleanor Mead joined the San Diego office in October 1937 with ten years experience in community organizations. She graduated from Smith College in 1924 and was certified by the University of California in 1926 for a graduate Social Service Curriculum. She worked for one year with the Santa Barbara Associated Charities as a case worker, then in 1927 the Bernal Heights Community Center hired her as their Executive Secretary where she remained until 1934. She became one of the many workers employed through FERA moneys: from 1934-35 she was Case Work Supervisor and Director of the Federal Transient Family Service Bureau; and from 1935-36 she was the Transient Supervisor of the State Emergency Relief Administration in San Francisco. She returned to Santa Barbara in 1936 to serve as Case Work Supervisor at their Neighborhood House until September 1937 when she accepted the San Diego position. See Family Welfare Service Association of America Collection [hereafter FWSAA], Box 41 (Correspondence-San Francisco), folder (American Association of Social Workers, SD Chapter, SD, Ca), SWHA.

[171] Eleanor Mead to Linton B. Swift (General Director), December 25, 1940, FWSAA, Box 41, folder (San Diego, CA 1940-41), SWHA.

[172] Christine Killory, "Temporary Suburbs: The Lost Opportunity of San Diego's National Defense Housing Projects," *Journal of San Diego History* 39, no. 1 and 2 (Winter-Spring 1993): 35.

[173] Ibid., 47.

[174] William Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1930-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

San Diego the female labor force increased 2 1/2 times from 28,058 to 71,640.[175] Its population was smaller than Detroit's (182,000 women in 1940 to 387,000 in 1944) but the degree of change was much greater.

Female in-migrants represented 51 percent of San Diego's total labor force and 80 percent of its new women workers; by 1944, 46 percent of all in-migrant women over the age of fourteen worked in waged-labor compared to 34 percent of local women.[176] They were younger than either the local San Diego or national female worker, and a greater percentage were married. Across the nation, the war accounted for women workers over the age of thirty-five to enter the workforce; the opposite occurred in San Diego as more younger women (mostly in-migrants) entered waged labor. Fifty-four percent of San Diego's female workforce had been under thirty-five in 1940, but by 1944, 57 percent of its women workers were under the age of thirty-five. These women did not have young children. From 1940 to 1944, women workers in San Diego with children under the age of ten remained at ten percent. Thus the shift in workforce demographics occurred among married women with no children under the age of ten (61 percent in 1940 to 66 percent in 1944) and with single women workers (29 percent in 1940 to 24 percent in 1944).

But the ten percent of mothers with young children who did labor outside the home desperately searched for day care. Up until the implementation of WPA nurseries, some children simply accompanied their mothers to the workplace or remained at home unattended. The needs generated by World War II defense workers challenged the small child care system, and the city struggled to provide day care to infants, toddlers, and young children. In a study of World War II-era, female aircraft workers, Marilyn Clark found that even though public child care resources increased in San Diego as the war effort progressed, these mothers preferred to make informal care arrangements with

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[175] Marilyn N. Clark, "Women Aircraft Workers in San Diego During the Second World War," (Masters thesis, San Diego State University, 1977), 45-48.

[176] Ibid. 78,675 of all in-migrants were women.

neighbors, friends, and family.[177] For instance, many wage-earning mothers provided room and board to the wives of servicemen in exchange for help with child care and domestic service.

A report for the Family Services Association of San Diego (FSASD), successor of the Associated Charities, noted that in 1942 many of the women and children connected to their cases came to San Diego to work. Many women could not secure the higher paying defense jobs, ending up in waitressing and other service sector jobs.[178] Summer 1941 proved particularly challenging for San Diego officials trying to maintain a smooth running city. According to the FSASD, in March 1941, eighteen parents requested placement of their children in boarding homes due to the war situation. Those numbers tripled to sixty-seven in July, increasing again to eighty-three in September. A slight decrease came in the Fall with seventy-eight parents requesting assistance in October, and another seventy-four in November. The influx of deviant behavior along with the troops caused special concern to local agencies like the Travelers Aid Society. Their study pinpointed a fifteen-year-old "seriously disturbed homosexual boy masquerading as a girl," as well as numerous pregnant and unmarried newcomers (suspiciously, these women all gave twenty-one as their age at the time of the interview), and runaway girls who were suffering as a direct result of the war.[179]

According to a study by the national office of the Family Welfare Association in 1942, social agencies in San Diego made "no effort" to establish consultation centers for women considering paid employment. That disinterest created the unfortunate situation where many mothers ignorantly used poor quality care. The study pointed out that many children were placed in unlicensed homes, a problem that plagued San Diegans for

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[177] Ibid., 79.

[178] "Notes on Intake, May 26, 1942," FSASD, Box 10: 1940-43.

[179] "Study of Women and Children Known to San Diego Travelers Aid Society in 1945," TASSD, Box 2, folder 34.

decades after the World War II boom.[180] Also, San Diego had not developed any systematic care for school-aged children. The Family Services report stated:

> In certain sections of the city, mothers who are not working assume responsibility for the supervision of children of women who are employed. This is proving to be difficult in some situations.[181]

The study also noted that women workers were leaving their jobs in the airplane factories specifically because they could not secure child care. Such studies helped convince the San Diego community that coordinated efforts could effect solutions. Consequently, the aircraft industry, the Public Welfare and Board of Education Departments, the Civilian Defense Council, and War Manpower Committee collaborated in 1942 to apply and secure Lanham Act funds. The statewide Committee for Children in Wartime worked to standardize programs, encouraging local programs to include educational components along with custodial care.[182] The city established twenty-one extended day care centers in conjunction with the public school district for children ages five years to sixteen years, offering programs before- and-after- school, on Saturdays, and during the summer break.[183] For younger children, the city housed eleven government nursery schools, fifteen state-licensed nurseries, and eight privately operated nurseries.

Yet, infant care remained a contested issue. Perhaps that is why a large system of family day care homes evolved in San Diego. Counts on March 1, 1943 showed 118 licensed day care homes; ten were licensed to care for infants and/or children aged one year to preschool, and six homes could care for up to ten pre-school aged children.[184] Local concerns like the United Way encouraged the city to provide infant care while the nurse supervisor of federally-funded centers openly discouraged women with infants

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[180] Page 2 of "Memo to FWAA Staff from MBB regarding War Effects on San Diego, CA," 29 October 1942, FWSAA, Box 41, folder (Assoc. Charities San Diego, CA).

[181] Ibid.

[182] California, Department of Education, *Child Care by California School Districts*, p. ii, as quoted in California, Department of Education, *Report on Child Care Centers Administered and Operated by California School Districts* (1949), 1.

[183] Clark, "Women Aircraft Workers," 75-76.

[184] "FSASD roster, March 1, 1943," FSASD, Box 10: 1940-43.

from wage work.[185] The United States Employment Service recommended that women use boarding home care for children under the age of two.

The 1943 President's Annual Report for the Family Service Association noted that the agency paid special attention to the problem of boarding defense workers children. The State Department of Social Welfare licensed the agency as a unit with authority to place children rather than just a referral agency due to the incredible backlog of needy children.[186] In San Diego, responsibility for nursery care shifted quickly from federal to local departments, and by May 1943, only three of the previous government-operated nurseries remained under federal control. The public school systems of San Diego and Chula Vista took over eight facilities and opened a new site in the Pacific Beach area.[187] Day care homes continued to be a popular form of care, and in May 1943, 156 licensed day care homes listed vacancies.

Agency officials seemed conflicted about how to explain assistance programs to the general public. While they understood the need for day care, officials did not want to appear anti-family, hence anti-American. Eleanor Mead of the Associated Charities explained that their work, which focused on families who had one parent working in defense (generally the mother), seldom extended to families in which both parents were present, working, and in need of child care. When that situation arose, her organization encouraged the mother to stay at home to raise the children. She emphasized:

> We believe strongly as an agency and as individual workers in the importance of our American family and home and we encourage its maintenance wherever it is possible. We do recognize however, that there are times when it is necessary for children to be away from their parents and in those cases which we accept we try to find the best substitute home for the children.[188]

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[185] Clark, "Women Aircraft Workers," 76-77.

[186] Mrs. R. H. Sundberg, "President's Annual Report, 21 January 1943, FSASD, Box 2: Board of Directors Minutes, January 1939-January 1945.

[187] Family Services Association of San Diego roster, May 1, 1943, FSASD, Box 10: 1940-43.

[188] Eleanor Mead, "Report of Executive Secretary," 19 January 1944, FSASD, Box 2: Board of Directors Minutes, January 1939-January 1945.

In that same report, Mead noted that for the year 1943, they made 87 different placements of children in foster boarding homes. The problem with infant care did not go away, whereby in 1944 the city established two experimental infant care centers for children six months to two years. Aircraft employers helped advertise the centers and emphasized health and safety features as well as the happy disposition of the children in these centers.[189]

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Institutional care no longer suited parental desires, therefore by 1944 concerned citizens called in national organizations like the Child Welfare League of America to survey the social situation that seemed to threaten children living in San Diego.[190]. Boarding homes were no more desirable but they developed as the only option available to parents who had no family in the area. Unlike Detroit, San Diegans did not have a variety of day nurseries or professionally-trained nursery school educators to secure quality child care for them. A few native San Diego women left the city to earn degrees in social work and child development, returning to extend their expertise into the community. But for the most part, San Diegans entered the industrial age with little sense of the social services needed in a major city.

Professionals began to advise organizations that they needed to both specialize their services and standardize procedures in order to distinguish their care from other agencies in the city. The establishment of the Community Welfare Council in 1922 created an organizational structure in which San Diego' agencies could begin to implement those suggestions.[191] Whereas institutions like the Children's Home tried to

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[189] "Child Care Centers Opened in San Diego," *Ryan Flying Report*, 9 July 1943, 6.

[190] Child Welfare League of America, Inc., "General Report of a Survey of Child Welfare Resources in San Diego," September 1944, in Child Welfare League of America Collection, Box 33: Surveys, folder 9 (California, 1943-44, 52) in the SWHA.

[191] Recommended by the *Pathfinder Social Survey*, the Community Welfare Council of San Diego was incorporated on September 30, 1922 and served primarily as a fund-raising body. After the Mangold Study, the city formed the Coordinating Council which was to concentrate its efforts at planning. See Marjorie N. Breitenbach, "The Development of the Role of the Community Welfare Council of San Diego

offer everything to a parent, after professionals took charge, it specialized in providing long-term, residential care to dependent children.

Key to understanding the process of professionalization is recognizing that San Diegans needed to learn to separate day care needs from the more comprehensive work of caring for state-dependent children. The next chapter examines how the implementation of professional standards influenced the direction of child care programs in San Diego. Whereas Detroit parents benefited from an influx of forward-thinking professionals in the 1920s, the absence of those professionals in San Diego until the 1930s kept parents tied to outdated modes of regulation that monitored their behavior and chastised their motivations for wage-earning. The short-lived public day care programs implemented through the Works Program Administration were directed not at serving wage-earning parents but in employing out-of-work teachers, nurses, and social workers.

Yet, the emergency nursery schools unwittingly created a network of future facilities used by defense industry workers in the 1940s. Evidence from privately-supported programs shows how the introduction of professional standards changed the way advocates and families interacted with one another. The emergence of Associated Charities in Detroit and San Diego brought critical organizational management that had been missing in those cities. Yet, growing tensions between social workers and those volunteers interested in child saving often overshadowed the genuine needs of parents to secure child care. The evidence also shows how parents began to insist on care that satisfied *their* wishes and not those of an authority figure. It is through these tensions that we can understand the rather complicated process in which child care agendas took shape and affected the lives of urban children.

County, 1914-1963: An Exploratory Study (M.S. thesis in Public Administration, San Diego State College, 1964), 29-34.

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CHOOSING TO CARE:
MEETING CHILDREN'S NEEDS IN DETROIT AND SAN DIEGO, 1880 TO 1945

By

Kyle Emily Ciani

Volume II

A DISSERTATION

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Chapter 4

"FITTING SQUARE PEGS INTO ROUND HOLES": (MIS)UNDERSTANDING SAN DIEGO'S CARE PROVIDERS

"Family needs not alms, but a friend
who will try to remove veil of egoism from man's eyes."

— Associated Charities of San Diego, November 9, 1909[1]

Beginning in 1910, opportunities for work contributed to the dramatic changes in the racial, class, and ethnic compositions of Detroit and San Diego. Laborers swarmed to San Diego before and after the close of the 1915-16 Panama-California Exposition, while in Detroit, industrial manufacturing attracted an increasingly diverse workforce. The professional makeup of these cities, however, differed greatly and contributed to the delivery of child care offered by each city. Within close proximity to land-grant universities in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and New York, agencies in Detroit had access to a ready pool of professionally-trained case workers and educators eager to practice their expertise. San Diego authorities had to recruit professionals away from established programs in the East or Midwest. Low salaries coupled with the fear of being isolated from family and friends caused many strong applicants to ignore a possible re-assignment to San Diego. But some professionals who had left the city to earn a degree at one of those prestigious establishments returned to their San Diego roots to introduce the standards of family case work to benevolent-minded volunteers.

During the 1910s, a new kind of influence entered the San Diego community as social workers and early childhood educators began to assert their professional authority

[1] FSASD, 12 November 1909.

into organizations designed to relieve poverty and its effects. Each effort helped in establishing a coordinated program that provided care for children, trained adults to correctly parent, and reassured the community that its youngest citizens would not turn into juvenile delinquents or worse. Yet their influence did not create substantial change until well into the era of New Deal change.

Throughout the next two chapters, I use situations facing the parents who turned to strangers for child care to explain who devised and controlled organizational child care in Detroit and San Diego. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how input by professionals began to change the kinds of services offered at local facilities, and how parent expectations changed as they viewed interactions with professionals as intrusions rather than as relief. Charity Organization Society (COS) workers in Detroit and San Diego handled family care in a variety of ways. But just as the gender of a client defined a parent's ability to provide care, the race, class, ethnicity, and religion of that family entered into advocate agendas for assistance. COS workers understood and even accepted the theories of family case work; yet when it came to problem solving, they still believed that "Americanization plus Christianization" remained the "remedies" for many cases.[2]

Beginning in 1914, the systematic study of social problems in San Diego — which included the need for child care — began to re-shape the kinds of resources available for working parents. Documentation, stricter payment guidelines, and the infusion of family case work affected the informal situation-by-situation operation that allowed San Diego volunteers and staffers to keep a close eye on individual children. Professional input expanded the kinds of care available, reaching into previously underserved neighborhoods and families ignored because of their race or ethnicity. Yet like many professionals, these experts did not fully honor the cultural foundations of the people they served.

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[2] "Report of August 1920," TASSD, Box 2, folder 25 (Statistical Reports, Case Histories, Circa 1922).

The actions of social workers, public health nurses, and educators operating in pre-World War II urban America create a plethora of interesting debates for the historian. For the past decade, scholars have re-visited evidence that captures interactions between professionals and clients. Their primary question — how did professionals use their positions of authority — demands a reassessment of the classic works on immigration and social welfare which found these professionals, especially those working in settlement houses, as the ultimate cultural pluralists.[3] Some, like sociologist Beverly Stadum, continue to argue that controlling the underclasses was the primary agenda of social workers.[4]

One method of control that historians agree upon is that the work of Americanization was carried out most efficiently in settlement houses. Americanization strategies converted immigrants from "Old World" heritages seen as peasant-like and uncivilized to an American culture fixated on the benefits of white, middle-class, nuclear living. Because settlement houses were generally located in close proximity to industrial work sites, a connection developed between the work being performed for wages and the work to gain citizenship. Thus, Americanization played a role in the abilities of immigrants to secure and retain meaningful employment in the United States.

While all settlements practiced Americanization projects, the degree at which these projects controlled the lives of immigrants is debatable. Recent scholarship notes how immigrants began to claim their neighborhood center as a place where cultural heritage could be preserved rather than abandoned. In her study of Jewish identity at a Philadelphia settlement, historian Elizabeth Rose reveals the complex nature of settlement interactions, particularly in regards to shaping ethnic identity; that settlements and their clients engaged in an "ongoing dialogue" about the role(s) of experts in clients' lives.[5]

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[3] Elizabeth Rose discusses this reassessment in, "From Sponge Cake to *Hamentashen*," 3-23. See also Ruth Hutchinson Crocker's Introduction in *Social Work and Social Order* for a detailed historiography on the settlement house movement in the United States.

[4] Beverly A. Stadum, "A Critique of Family Case Workers 1900-1930: Women Working With Women," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 17, no. 3 (September 1990): 83.

[5] Rose, "From Sponge Cake to *Hamentashen*, 4.

Such attention to time is useful beyond analysis of the settlement movements. Perhaps the control that Stadum finds so evident among social workers in pre-Depression Minneapolis should be analyzed in more time-specific ways. That analysis would confine an expert's control over a client to the first contact between the two individuals. After all, the "victims" presented by Linda Gordon in her historical study of domestic violence in Boston exhibited remarkable savvy in dealing with their social workers. As they grew accustomed to caseworkers' questions and interrogations, victimized women learned how to answer in order to secure relief money, shelter, or protection from an abusive husband.[6] Some settlements, Rose argues, followed similar tacks. Durability allowed for the Jewish community to establish itself as a cultural force in the city, allowing it to "pressure the settlement to adapt to the Jewish identity . . . Ultimately, the agency had to make a decision between allegiance to the Jewish group and allegiance to the ideals of the settlement movement."[7]

Reformers in Detroit and San Diego demonstrated no clear-cut motivation for their directives in regulating working-class residents. Critics of professional ethos cited Detroit social workers for concentrating more on theory than on placing children in appropriate housing; in San Diego, because of this city's historical trajectory, critics simply hoped to inform San Diegans of professional standards. One way to get beyond polar arguments of control vs. assistance is to ask whether advocates for children saw their involvement as control or as help. Can we say that assisting a mother with return transport to relatives is control? Did removing undernourished and dirty children from the care of their single, unemployed father represent control or protection? Benevolent and professional workers did make character judgments about the families they helped, so we need to understand the extent to which these judgments affected their decisions to help a family. Moreover,

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[6] Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives*, 293-295.
[7] Rose, "From Sponge Cake to *Hamentashen*, 5.

professional standards began to influence change in agency operations to influencing the options advocates could propose.

In this chapter, I focus on the emerging professional climate in San Diego to examine how changes in standards affected the delivery of child care. The Children's Home and Neighborhood House implemented standards in the 1920s, while it took another fifteen years for Traveler's Aid Society of San Diego (TASSD) workers to be convinced of the importance of standardization. By 1937 they admitted that:

> The moving of a dependent child and planning for same must follow a certain course . . . It is a long drawn out process that the average person does not understand. In other words it is a long time planning for the good of less fortunate children.[8]

Implementing those standards required the persistence of social workers trained in family case work and in volunteers who accepted the need to incorporate experts into their agencies. For San Diego, this process would be an evolving one that would not find true root until after World War II.

A "Condition" not a "Theory": Confronting Expert Advice

When they appeared in San Diego in the early twentieth century, social workers joined a strong network of organized volunteers who had worked with families since the mid-nineteenth century. These professionals soon discovered that caring for impoverished and/or orphaned children in San Diego involved a number of people, institutions, and strategies that were not necessarily working in concert. Some organizations had expanded their personnel to include degreed experts as early as 1909, but most agencies waited until the 1920s to begin replacing volunteers with professionals.

Organizational managers, like Associated Charities (AC) secretary Mary Hill, understood the importance of using trained rather than well-meaning volunteers. In their assessments of distressed families, "friendly visitors" connected their supervisors to life on

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[8] "1937 Annual Narrative Report," TASSD, Box 2, folder 30 (Narrative Report, Circa 1926).

the street. At the December 7, 1909 AC meeting, Hill learned that a Mrs. Keinsmith — a "missionary nurse" — was tending a sick Mexican mother and her baby while the father searched for work. Hill assigned a friendly visitor to the case to counter any unprofessional advice given by a missionary. Hill's choice to focus on Mrs. Keinsmith's work is intriguing considering the secretary's other organizational responsibilities. In the same meeting, the committee voted to table the investigations of seven new cases, deciding instead to focus on raising money for their wavering budget.[9] Hill chose to interfere with the missionary work as one way to assert her authority as secretary of the professionally-informed agency.

Some cases caught the special interest of workers who devoted endless hours to providing care for children at risk. Consider the sisters we met in Chapter 3, Sara and Francine Wissner. Their father and step-mother regularly called on the Children's Home to shelter the girls. Most children simply passed through the Home, but a few children, like Sara and Francine, experienced their entire childhood in the institution. Sara Wissner, nine years old when the Home took her in permanently, left the facility upon her sixteenth birthday to enter domestic service. In 1900, her sister, Francine, also left the Home at the age of sixteen to live with a local woman, presumably as an employee. But on February 21, 1901 — just one year later — a Home worker noted that Francine "fell from bicycle in coming to the Home and unable to return to Mrs. Taylor. Later, employed in the Home."[10] Since the age of five, Francine called the facility her home. Nursery workers did not desert Francine, but rather, accepted their continual responsibility as care providers, giving her safe shelter in return for her labor as their domestic.

Like other urban centers, women involved in San Diego's club movement assumed the bulk of responsibility for sensitizing citizens to community needs. In the late nineteenth century, they developed a philanthropic foundation for programs and institutions that

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[9] FSASD, 7 December 1909.
[10] SDCCa 20/21, 40/41, 206/295.

solved the immediate needs of distressed people. Their primary concern, however, lay in the care of women and children, therefore the facilities they founded reflected this philosophy. The kind of long-term commitment extended to the Wissner sisters changed by the 1910s, as more agencies struggled with the process of incorporating professional methodology into their interactions with agency clients. At the same time, professionals began pondering the often paradoxical arrangements facing their female clients. Why couldn't these women secure work that adequately supported their family? Why couldn't they leave their abusive husbands or demand proper support from these men? And, why couldn't these women understand that boarding their babies benefited rather than hindered their situations?

As professionals struggled to answer these questions, they came face to face with parents who exercised much greater agency than those desperate souls saved by the Woman's Home Association in the nineteenth century. By the 1920s, mothers searched for employment that allowed them to keep their children at home. One woman, Claire Decker, insisted on finding a job where she could take her baby girl, despite Associated Charities' promises that the Home would find room for the child. But Mrs. Decker refused to cave into agency pressure, eventually finding work keeping house for several men on a ranch in East County with the assistance of the Methodist Social Service.[11] There, her baby could live with her, eliminating the need for day care. At points when the secular AC provoked parental angst, mothers and fathers often turned to religious organizations for help. Those organizations existed in San Diego longer, thus, their volunteers were often more knowledgeable of possible work and boarding situations.

Consider an example from the Traveler's Aid Society of San Diego (TASSD). In November 1921, TASSD found lodging and food for an "anxious" and "bewildered but very determined little Mother" of two young children. A Mexican national, the mother immigrated to San Diego to find work which would fully support her family, where she

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[11] FSASD, 21 July 1916.

depended on the kindness of the TASSD to find safe shelter for her family. Report notes testify to the fact that this case required concerted effort by Mrs. Anna Speer, a TASSD worker. Indeed, her supervisor praised her, stating "What our Mrs. Speer has done for this little Mexican woman would fill a small volume. The fitting of square pegs into round holes is always attended with considerable labor."[12] Traveler's Aid workers admitted that this case was both trying and rewarding, and like their client, depended on the benevolence of a host of local organizations to help them secure aid for this "little mother" and her children. Their success in connecting with outside resources allowed them to continue avoiding the adoption of more professional standards.

The TASSD tried to fit "square pegs into round holes" since its incorporation in 1914. Like its sister units in other cities, San Diego's organization was established by benevolent-minded women to protect unattached young women and adolescent girls from the evil forces that lurked in big cities.[13] By 1915, job opportunities connected to international expositions and the U.S. Navy attracted unemployed women to the Coast in hopes of finding service sector work in novelty shops, restaurants, and hotels. Young mothers followed their spouses and boyfriends to San Diego, where more often than not, TASSD workers found themselves securing safe shelter for their children. They turned to places like the Children's Home for temporary beds, forging cooperation between charity organization societies, like Traveler's Aid and the Children's Home, in securing child care for newcomers to the city.

San Diegans grew accustomed to new families arriving in their town; however, some families were far more welcome than others. The city received national recognition from the 1915-16 Panama-California Exposition, and ties to the military produced irreversible demographic changes. New arrivals included those seeking relief from

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[12] "Stat Reports, November 1921," TASSD Box 2, folder 21 (Statistical Reports, Case Histories, Circa 1921).

[13] TASSD Box 3, folder 11 (Board Minutes, Circa 1914-45). Traveler's Aid Society papers are used effectively by Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem.*

tuberculosis or to enjoy the recreational pleasures of the shore, worshippers of non-traditional religions who found refuge on the San Diego shores, and mothers who brought their children to San Diego to reunite with fathers serving in the U.S. Navy. Work opportunities in fishing and cannery operations attracted family groups immigrating from Portugal, Italy, Mexico, and Japan, many of whom found themselves seeking out the services of San Diego's charities. The ways in which professionals and volunteers attended to the needs of these families reveals the tension that persisted in introducing family case work standards to communities dominated by benevolent volunteers.

Social workers tried to fully assess a family's situation before suggesting any action; volunteers, on the other hand, handled problems immediately without any attention to the possible mitigating circumstances causing disruption in a family. In her analysis of family case work standards in Minneapolis, Beverly Stadum found that by the 1920s, families were less likely to receive immediate material relief when social workers investigated the situation under question.[14] Social workers, eager to use their newly-learned professional skills, turned to a client's neighbors, coworkers, and employers for information about the financial and social state of the family. Answering their questions could take days, leaving a family without coal, groceries or medicine. Students of social work in Minneapolis learned how to "verify" family situations by researching the births, deaths, marriages and mortgages of case families, but seldom attended to the immediate needs of their clients. As Stadum explains, "The result was an amassing of objective information and interviews in the records whose practical use was unclear."[15] For these Minneapolis social workers, the process of adhering to professional standards became more important than providing aid to desperate families.

San Diego social workers apparently reached the same kind of crossroads in their relief work, but removed from the center of professional study, they could and did continue

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[14] Stadum, "A Critique of Family Case Workers 1900-1930," 73-100.
[15] Ibid., 78.

to focus on material relief for families. That aid included arranging for adoptions or temporary board, and moving families back to their original homes in other states or countries. Because of the transient nature of San Diego's populace, advocates often dealt with trying to find lost family members or connect unattached women and children to resources to help keep their family together. Many of their cases included locating a child's father, mother, or other blood relation. Judgments about families regularly entered into case records when San Diego workers tried to connect children with appropriate guardians. Unlike the situation in Minneapolis, social workers in San Diego learned to depend on untrained volunteers for help in stabilizing families.

Never unbiased, personal judgments did enter into advocates' assessments of families no matter if they were professionally-trained or volunteered their time. For instance, when TASSD workers secured rail passage to northern California for an eight-year-old boy from a divorced family, they described his family history as "very pathetic."[16] The boy split his time between living in San Diego and Vallejo in the northern part of the State. Although both parents had remarried, the fact that this couple arranged for and could handle joint custody held little weight for the TASSD. They believed that no home should be broken. But they accepted the assignment out of an understanding that this boy's safety lay in their hands and that his mother depended on and trusted their expertise in securing his safe passage.

In another case of a child traveling alone, the TASSD worker grudgingly overcame her biases regarding the capacity of a working mother to love and protect her child. On the afternoon of September 3, 1915, the worker found a five-year-old boy "wandering around aimlessly" at the Santa Fe Train Station. Since his mother failed to show at the depot to pick up the child, the worker "suspected domestic troubles" for a number of reasons.[17] First, in her mind, no decent mother would set a child alone on a train with no note to

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[16] "Report for June 1921," TASSD, Box 2, folder 25 (Statistical Reports, Circa 1922).

[17] "Report of Master Forrest Holmes, September 3, 1915," TASSD, Box 2, folder 2 (Case Histories, circa 1915).

explain his destination. Secondly, the worker discovered from the boy that his mother and father no longer lived together. Months earlier his mother sent away her children: the boy to live with her sister in Los Angeles, and a daughter to friends in Redlands. These arrangements proved instability rather than responsibility to the TASSD worker. Lastly, the mother worked at the Lower California Fisheries Company, and as a wage earner, this mother could not be trusted to properly care for her child.

With few leads to track the boy's family, the worker phoned the Fisheries Company. Within the hour, assistant manager Berkele appeared at the station. After questioning the boy, Berkele replied, "it was a shame that a bright boy like that should be thrown out on the world." Berkele confirmed that the mother and father separated, and he believed that the mother did not want the boy. The manager also explained that the woman had not worked at the cannery for several weeks, but offered no reason for her dismissal. While he did not know her exact address, Berkele offered general directions to the southeast part of town — a known working-class neighborhood — and the volunteer set out with the boy to find his mother. Relying on the mumbling of a disgruntled employer and the memory of a five-year-old child, the TASSD worker miraculously found the home that evening. Upon knocking, "a tall, fair and rather pretty woman" answered the door. According to the worker, "The boy impulsively said 'hello mama!', [and the mother] grabbed him and kissed him over and over again." The worker reported that she saw "no signs of him not being wanted."[18]

Admitting that she believed Berkele when he described the mother's character as questionable, this advocate's observations of the woman and environment made her reassess the demeanor of a wage-earning mother. The worker's report explained that the mother lived "in poor surroundings, but she looked clean and neat and did not have any look of dissipation as Mr. Berkele had led her to expect."[19] Although the mother

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

confessed that she was unemployed and had to buy her groceries on credit, the worker believed that the boy found a welcome home in San Diego.

The record ends with a happy mother/son reunion; however, her son's presence likely worried the mother considering she had earlier sent the boy to live with her sister. The interest of Mr. Berkele is intriguing. Berkele may simply have exhibited a common curiosity about the woman's private life, but trekking to the train depot seemed unusual behavior for an employer. Why would he care so much about an employee's child to leave the cannery in the middle of the workday, and then to offer only disparaging comments about the boy's mother. Had Berkele been to the woman's home? Did this former employee reject his sexual advances on the cannery floor, leading him to fire her? Or had she simply been an incompetent and unreliable employee?

No matter the answers to those questions, a social worker appointed by the Associated Charities would certainly handle the assignment very differently. The boy would have entered the Children's Home as a temporary ward of the court, with an investigation of the mother's home confirming for the professional that Home personnel provided the best care for the boy. Securing county payment for his room and board, the social worker would try to find the mother employment at a job with wages sufficient to maintain the boy's board at the Home. Thus, in this case mother and child remained re-united despite the fact that this mother did not present the most stable of financial situations. The TASSD volunteer decided that the boy benefited more from the emotional stability the mother brought to this boy's life than economic security.

Some groups in San Diego did benefit from the intrusions of Anglo, middle-class professionals, namely Mexican-heritage families. Local professionals noted the need for a Spanish-speaking friendly visitor at the October 10, 1913 Advisory Council meeting. Within one week, they appointed to the Council the only bilingual visitor they knew, Miss Goldie Primrose, who began immediate interactions with Mexican families.[20] But

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[20] FSASD 10 October 1913; and 17 October 1913.

prejudice continued to label Mexican people as lazy and unclean, leaving them segregated into poverty-stricken neighborhoods. Historian Cynthia Jane Shelton, notes that, "in San Diego, the settlement workers did not work to change the community's attitude toward and relationship with the immigrants in their city. On the contrary, the larger community shaped the response of the workers themselves to their immigrant neighbors."[21] Shelton argues that social programs like Neighborhood House were created by "a group of recently arrived outsiders who had prior settlement and relief work experience [who] brought with them sensitivity to the problems of the underprivileged."[22]

Shelton's conclusions overlook the fact that some of these social workers grew up in San Diego where they learned to deprecate Mexicans and other minority groups. Even though some members of the College Women's Club (CWC) spent time in Eastern universities learning to assist under-privileged people, an acceptance of Anglo superiority continued to inform their interactions with San Diego clients. A few reformers embarked on personal journeys to change their ethnocentrism. Native San Diegan Edith Shatto King admitted that "as a child, I was never taught to fear or hate the 'dirty' Mexicans, only to despise them."[23] In recalling her childhood she remembered her father blaming Mexicans if anything was missing about the garden. She also reflected on an incident in which a group of Mexican children grew angry at not being able to play in the favorite spot of Anglo children:

> I remember them, quick and proud, lighter complexioned, with long Spanish faces . . . It never occurred to me then that we Americans were the real interlopers in that small, new southern California town; that the families of the Yorbas, the DeSotos, Carillos and Figueroas had been there for generations before our coming.[24]

Shatto King took these impressions with her to college where she experienced a transformation that guided her into the settlement movement. When Shatto King became

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[21] Shelton, "Neighborhood House of San Diego," 20.

[22] Ibid., 32-33.

[23] Quoted on page 624 of Edith Shatto King, "My Mexican Neighbors," *The Survey* 37 (1917): 624-626.

[24] Ibid.

head resident of San Diego's Neighborhood House, she remembered the unjust persecution endured by Mexican children. She helped implement English classes at Neighborhood House so that the children could perform better in the public schools, and organized dances and play groups so that Mexican youngsters had their own safe places to play. Her actions had little to do with Americanizing or controlling those children using Neighborhood House. Rather, she wanted to remedy some of the hurt her family and friends inflicted in the past.

Helen D. Marston, one of the founding members of the CWC, returned to San Diego after working in Denison House in Boston and joined the Neighborhood House staff.[25] As the daughter of San Diego business leader and philanthropists George and Anna Gunn Marston, this graduate of Wellesley was firmly connected to the power structures in San Diego. Yet, like Shatto King, she became a loyal advocate of the Mexican people in California, fighting to change harsh stereotypes that stigmatized them as mistrustful, ignorant, and backward. That often rocky fight forced Marston to eventually acknowledge her own racial prejudice.

In an article to *The Survey* in 1920, Marston admitted being raised to believe that Mexicans were a "lazy people, with a care-free philosophy that put off doing everything until tomorrow." While living at Neighborhood House, she observed a very different world, developing a sincere respect for the Mexican women and girls with whom she interacted on a daily basis. Marston observed:

> The women of our neighborhood carry the double burden of home with its many babies and of work in the fish canneries, whither they go, day or night, at the sound of the whistles. We become acquainted with them first as they come daily to the Municipal Milk Station, and as they drink coffee with us while waiting for their turn at the clinic, and we find that even the youngest mothers are quiet, tired, preoccupied women.[26]

Marston did not share these same feelings about Mexican men, and she struggled with reconciling ideas formed as a child with what she later observed as a young woman.

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[25] Shelton, "The Neighborhood House of San Diego," 37-38.

[26] Helen D. Marston, "Mexican Traits," *The Survey* 44 (1920): 562-564 (quote from p. 562).

In her words, "the imputation of laziness to men and boys has more foundation," but she admitted that, "the issue is a harder one to decide." After working with girls and boys at Neighborhood House, Marston decided that Mexican girls worked harder than their brothers. She also began to understand that her earlier perceptions of an innate laziness among Mexican males had little to do with initiative and everything to do with opportunity:

> I confess that I cannot give the same evidence of a willingness to work among our boys as I have given among the girls. Most of the boys, when a difficult stage is reached in study, manual training or drawing, begin to play. But I think that fundamentally the trouble with the boys is not laziness; rather that it is the twofold lack of an interest in what we are trying to give them and of the training necessary to do sustained work from week to week. When we have been able to arouse the interest, we have some memories to cheer us.[27]

She believed that Mexican fathers needed more ambition to adequately support their families, but she qualified her feelings by also admitting that she did not know the Mexican father well. While admonishing them for not trying hard enough to learn technical skills and English, Marston also recognized the "distinct effort" made by Mexican fathers to attend English classes offered at Neighborhood House. Yet, she struggled with these realizations and pointed out that "their [Mexican fathers] deficiency, like that of the boys, is lack of ideas rather than an unwillingness to work."[28] To Marston, contradictions like these only confused a situation which she as a reformer tried to simplify.

Shatto King and Marston used the notions of a primitive culture to shine a positive light on their Mexican clients. Shatto King romanticized the poverty of Mexican migrants, offering her readers a sanitized vision of crude conditions:

> They lived, for the most part, in shacks decorated with long strings of red peppers drying in the sun . . . On moonlight nights one rarely passed by without hearing the soft tones of La Paloma from a guitar or a violin, and sometimes laughter and gay Spanish words, coming from the shadows under the pepper trees. Other families of Mexicans liked the open starlight better than shack or garden. They traveled in groups and camped about the country wherever work was to be found . . . Men, women and children worked together. And how vivid in my memory are the women at work in

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

> the peanut fields, clad in gay colors of red and yellow with a black shawl . . . and their fat brown babies close by, naked in the sun.[29]

Shatto King failed to understand that Mexican migrants had no other choice than to keep their babies in the field while they labored from 4 a.m. to 6 p.m., often in the hot sun. Likewise, living under the open sky was their only option, not one they chose.

Marston also romanticized the Mexican's living conditions. She wrote that "their primitive ways of living help," because "cracks let in air, sunshine is sought for its heat, and there is little furniture to make cleaning hard." Her rationalization of their poverty is annoying to the modern reader, but no more so than Marston's rationale an inherent dishonesty among Mexican people. She wrote (and I quote at length to relay the full meaning of her ideas):

> Everyone knows that the Mexican does not have the same standards of honesty that the American has. Nearly everyone assumes therefore that he is less honest without trying to understand even his ideals of personal honor much less the significance, at least to him, of such inherited ideas as he has, such as that of the national ownership of land. My experience is too limited to settle the question, but I give it as it is. Certainly to tell the truth is not so important a thing among our neighbors as it is among us. In small matters it is more important to please. Yet I think one can generally get into a sincere relation with Mexicans just as one can with Americans. Our Mexican boys, while they lie freely to hide evil done, yet have, I think, been as frank with us, when questioned directly, as American boys have been. I have twice had boys say, on top of a lot of lies, "Well, I *will* tell you the truth," then tell it straight out. A woman, speaking of a nurse who had been kind to her, said, ""I tell *her* no lies." Some of my friends, I think, would tell me no very big lies. (emphasis Marston's)[30]

Marston's article is interesting on a number of levels. First, it shows her intellectual understanding of the intercultural environment in which she worked, and the power of communicating that setting in an international journal. *The Survey* drew an audience of reformers throughout the country as the most influential and widely read professional journal of its time in the social welfare field. Secondly, she allows us to see the tension she experienced in re-evaluating her world view. But Marston unwittingly reveals that, in

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[29] Shatto King, "My Mexican Neighbors," 624.
[30] Marston, "Mexican Traits," 563.

some areas, she clung to irrational stereotypes of her clients. We see Marston's humanness in this contradiction: reformers did not set out to control those in their care but in their attempts to improve lives they, in fact, did control. Third, it illuminates the discrimination and prejudice subjected by Mexican-heritage people living in San Diego.

It is these kinds of ideas that are most troubling and detract from her earlier efforts to elevate the standing of Mexican people among "Americans." Contradictory in the way she expressed her respect for Mexicans, Marston continued to accept Anglo prejudices that characterized them as a dishonest and primitive people. Yet at the same time, she championed their rights to earn wages, live in clean affordable housing, and have access to medical care, proper nutrition, and day care. In explaining why Mexicans lived primitively, Marston noted, "Is it not possible that these descendants of the Mayas are a backward people today, because for centuries they were deprived in their own country of the proper soil in which to develop?"[31] Marston opened herself to criticism from her contemporaries by acknowledging that Mexicans had been unjustly denied property for this was truly libelous thinking for an Anglo in 1920. However, her position as a college-educated "New Woman" probably did little to legitimate her ideas among the majority of conservative-minded Anglo residents of San Diego. As with many reformers educated in the Progressive Era, Social Darwinism — the responsibility of the wealthy (and thus most capable) to provide for those less fortunate — played a role in forming Marston's ideas about her role in elevating the status of her Mexican neighbors.

Marston hid her racism under the cloak of reform; perhaps those living in the barrio would have rather dealt with blatant displays of racism stripped of any hidden messages. Indeed, Marston remained unaware of her racism into old age. Years later in an interview, Marston "spoke with disdain" of those volunteers and staff dedicated to the Americanization of Mexicans, and vehemently separated herself from their company. Instead, Marston proudly recounted the time settlement workers cared for the Mexican

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[31] Ibid., 564.

twin babies brought to Neighborhood House by their father after their mother had abandoned them. That racial ethnic integration and acceptance was the kind of incident Marston hoped her friends *and* critics would remember.[32]

Effects of Professional Intervention

Professional influence altered assistance resources, with the Children's Home experiencing the greatest change. It opened in 1888 as a resource for destitute mothers; by 1940 it evolved into a long-term care facility for abandoned and orphaned children, many of who were considered troubled and even delinquent. Care providers at the Home changed with the children. Formerly operated by volunteers, professionally-trained social workers entered the facility in the 1930s.

The Home's original mission of offering child care for distressed mothers fit the transient nature of San Diego's workforce. The Home served hundreds of children in its first forty years. Parents who admitted a child one month, often returned to the facility the next week or even next year with two or three other children. Some children lived at the Home for just a day until their mother could secure a job and housing. For example, in April 1917 twenty-eight-year-old Clarice Brundige contacted the Home to care for her daughter, Dorothy. Recently divorced, Brundige needed to support her family, so she found work as a housekeeper, using the Home as a way to maintain custody of her children.[33] From April to September 1917, Brundige paid the Home $5 per month. In August she increased her payment to $10 per month when she admitted her seven-year-old daughter, Louise. Over the next year, her fees increased to $15 per month. On July 17, 1920, three years after discovering the Home, she claimed her children whereby records of the Brundige family end.

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[32] Shelton, "The Neighborhood House of San Diego," 55, 60.
[33] SDCCb 8; and *San Diego City Directory* 1918 and 1919.

Some parents regularly withdrew and re-admitted their children over the course of several years, while others decided to end their connections as parents by walking away from the children they either admitted to the nursery or abandoned in the street. "Abandoned" was a notable description by intake personnel in the first five years of service. When an abandoned baby or young child appeared at their door, nursery workers contacted the appropriate authority who, in turn, decided the future fate of the child. In all cases, race determined the actions of Home personnel: workers called Father Ubach when a two-day old American Indian baby named Guadalupe arrived on their doorstop; they arranged to send Ana, the five-month-old child of an Indian mother and Chinese father, to the Chinese Home for Girls in San Francisco; and when an Anglo mother "left for parts unknown" after giving birth to her son Theodore, the county supervisor turned the baby boy over to the care of a friend.[34] Yet, the nursery became ten-week-old Rebecca Rae's permanent home upon her delivery to the Home on December 16, 1890. Blind, abandoned, and Anglo-American, the County paid for her care; but she lived only a few years, dying on June 16, 1894.[35] Five-day-old Ruby was left at the Home's door "by a man who drove away immediately."[36] Healthy and white, County supervisors had no trouble finding an adoptive home for the child — Ruby left two days after her appearance at the Home.

Workers generally attempted to arrange adoptions for Anglo children so that they did not grow up in institutional care. These adoptions, however, were not always successful. At 2:00 a.m. on July 9, 1900, a "very dirty" baby boy ("about three months old") appeared on the doorstep at the Home. The matron found him wrapped in a "brown, long shawl with black silk fringe." She fed and bathed him, later reporting the incident to

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[34] SDCCa 12, 85, and 32. Guadalupe entered the Home on March 17, 1889 and stayed for five months. The entry read, "Abandoned. Taken to be cared for by direction of Fr. Ubach;" Ana was five months old when she entered the home in September 1891, and the County paid for her board until she left for San Francisco in April, 1892; Theodore was just one hour old when the Home received him. He left the day he arrived, February 11, 1890.

[35] SDCCa 54.

[36] SDCCa 102. She arrived at the Home on February 27, 1892 and left February 29, 1892.

the County supervisors and Chief of Police.[37] Her final notation, "no clues," almost served as a metaphor for this child's life. Six weeks later (August 31, 1900), the Home tried to place him for adoption with a married couple, but the wife returned the baby to the Home after five days, explaining that he "disturbed her husband during the night when crying."[38] Named Jacob William by Home workers, they released him to another adoptive mother, Mrs. Boyden, on September 23, 1902. Two years later, Mr. Boyden brought the boy back to the Home because his wife had left him and "he could no longer care for the child." But Boyden returned a few months later and claimed the child.[39] On June 12, 1905, a county supervisor prompted by Home staff requests removed the now five-year-old boy from the Boyden residence and brought him back to the Home because "he was not treated right."[40]

Concerned San Diegans could monitor parent behavior and intervene at will, however, Home staff seemed to take a special interest in this child from that first early morning wake-up. They baptized and named him, followed his progress, and intervened when they believed he was being mistreated. The smallness of San Diego allowed them to keep track of children like Willie; moreover, as a single father, Boyden possessed few attributes to assert his right to retain custody of the boy.

In another situation, the Home's board of directors contacted the Chief of Police in Santa Barbara to remove a child from an adoptive home. A handwritten note to Chief James Ross explained:

> The members of the Childrens Home Board feared that poor C.F. had fallen with the wrong hands. The people seemed to be decent, nice people, but it is another case of appearances being deceptive. It is the unanimous wish of the Board of Directors of the Childrens Home that the child C.F. be returned to us . . . We want to see the child well-placed, but not abused.[41]

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[37] SDCCa 266.
[38] SDCCa 271.
[39] SDCCa 437.
[40] SDCCa 344 and 559.
[41] Note to Mr. James Ross, Chief of Police, Santa Barbara, CA on February 24, 1906, SDCC, Box 5, Series IV- Scrapbooks.

The Board offered to pay the child's steamer fare to San Diego as well as any other expenses incurred to secure her safe return. Signed only T.L., the note's author made a conscious effort to keep confidential the identity of the adopted child by using only initials. This case, like the earlier problem-adoption, demonstrates the sincere interest of Home officials and staff in the children who passed through their doors. While they did not want children to remain in institutions until they reached maturity, they also did not want them to land in abusive situations.

But their actions also hint that they saw the children in the Home as marked; that is, these children had to prove their value to prospective adoptive parents. As abandoned children, they could not provide prospective adoptive families with a family history. This lack of information presented a great barrier to adoption. Prior to World War II adoptive parents demanded not only *a* history but a *pristine* family history of the child. In her study of single pregnancy, Ricki Solinger points out that before World War II, "an illegitimate child was typically considered a 'child of sin,' the product of a mentally deficient mother. As such, this child was tainted and undesirable."[42] Single mothers, no matter their race, were encouraged to keep their illegitimate children as a sort of penance for the sin of premarital sex. Usually, families dealt with the problem of illegitimacy quietly with little input from agencies such as maternity homes. Solinger argues that "some among the very rich and very poor may have had opportunities or may have lived in communities tolerating deviance differently from the usual ways."[43] The transient makeup of the San Diego populace represented one of those kinds of difference. Women learned that they could leave their newborn at the Children's Home to escape the shame of illegitimacy. Thus, adoption represented the best option in cases of abandonment or abuse.

By 1910, AC and Children's Home staff began investigating adoptive homes to head off some of the earlier mishaps among adoption arrangements, so those couples

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[42] Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie*, 149.
[43] Ibid., 152.

hoping to adopt now needed to prove their value as potential parents.[44] When Mrs. Miles reported to the AC that she knew of a good home in Del Mar for a boy between the ages of twelve and fourteen, she was quick to add that he should be clothed and sent to school in exchange for "light services about the place."[45] At the very next meeting, committee members were ready with suggestions of boys known to them, but Mrs. Miles reported that the home had not yet been investigated.

This kind of investigation was born out of tighter controls made by the State government regarding the care of children under institutional protection. While the State of California passed legislation in 1903 requiring licensing of all boarding homes, few institutions adhered to any credential process. According to State investigators Frances Cahn and Valeska Bary, responsibility for licensing homes lay with County health departments or health officers, but since no state-wide system existed for the correlation of this work, few officials ever found time to investigate.[46] Aimed at eliminating "Baby Farms" and regulating maternity homes rumored to be mistreating unmarried mothers, the law did not take effect until 1913 when a second law established state supervision of regulation under the Board of Charities and Corrections. That supervision changed in 1925 to the Department of Public Welfare, and again in 1927 to the Department of Social Welfare.[47] These early attempts by the Home to use professional standards recognized by the social welfare community helped earn the Home a strong standing among reformers and social workers.

The 1913 Report of the Children's Home reflects a philosophical change from its nineteenth-century motivations. Specifically, the report credits the child-study movement for making their work possible and that members enjoyed playing a role in "correcting

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[44] FSASD, 30 September 1910.

[45] FSASD, 23 September 1910.

[46] Frances Cahn and Valeska Bary, *Welfare Activities of Federal, State and Local Governments in California, 1850-1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), 28.

[47] Ibid.

theory by practice."[48] Home Board President, Evelyn N. Lawson, admitted that the shortage of trained workers affected their work. "Our distance from the centers of social work," Lawson explained, forced the Home to become their "own training school, paying for the privilege of being so, because young children cannot be neglected while we make deliberate choice of attendants."[49] Fixing responsibility for the financial support of children using the Home became a key objective among the board. Investigations of families led them to change their expectations of payment by parents and other responsible relatives. Family members were now charged more for board, decreasing the support provided by state and county aid. With that increased familial support came a recognition that other privately-funded organizations could assist with paying for some children's care. Along with the continuing aid of Juvenile Court and County Supervisors, other agencies such as Navy relief, Jewish Hebrew Society, Silver Gate Lodge, and the Associated Charities began paying for some children's board.[50] These fiscal decisions originated in part because the Home could no longer rely on the good nature and plump pocketbooks of a magnanimous volunteer core. When it began hiring professionally-trained women they gained the expertise of a credentialed advocate yet lost the informality of meeting expenses through private donations.

The most noticeable change at the Children's Home appeared in judgments made by intake personnel about parents. Beginning in the 1920s, Home matrons grew concerned with the morality of parents using the Home. The Juvenile Court placed eleven-year-old Bobby Joe Carter in the Home on January 8, 1920, citing him "delinquent" and his home "unfit." His mother earned $55 per month as a maid for a missionary couple and the intake chart listed her as having a "good physical condition." But she was divorced and did not know the whereabouts of Bobby Joe's father. The chart also noted that this mother

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[48] *Report of the San Diego Children's Home Association, May 1, 1913* in Info File 64, Folder 16, SDHS.

[49] Ibid., 6.

[50] For example of this aid see SDCCc 17; c56; and c58 in SDCC Box 9, Case Records 1919-1924; and SDCCd 54/55/56 and SDCCd 57 in SDCC Box 10, Case Records 1925-1929.

delivered Bobby Joe just eleven days after marrying his father, tangible evidence of immorality between this couple from their beginning as a family.[51] Bobby Joe did not like the Home, running away only six days after the Court admitted him, proving that for many children, the Home served as a detention center rather than a home.

By the late 1920s, the population at the Children's Home resembled more the Bobby Joe's — troubled, "delinquent," and restless — than the Wissner girls of the 1890s. Home policy dictated accepting "only those cases where admission . . . seems the only alternative." That meant screening out parents who "tired and discouraged, turned to an institution such as the Home as an easy way of shifting their responsibilities."[52] As Anne Durst explains in her study of day care, child care workers in the 1920s no longer applauded attempts of wage-earning mothers to support the family.[53] On the contrary, these mothers became unfit, nearly deviant, to the social welfare community. Social workers believed that families should remain together whatever the cost. In their attempt to emulate professional standards, matrons at the Home worked to "persuade the parents to reconsider" putting their child in the facility, thereby, "maintaining their home and a united family."[54] Home personnel boasted of their ability to incorporate such standards. Underscored in their 1927 report is the approval they received from "welfare workers" on their intake procedures.

In 1930, the Home employed its first social worker as an initial step in re-envisioning its purpose in the community.[55] By 1938, it refined its mission to caring for children who "did not fit into the accepted pattern of behavior . . . Boys and girls, particularly adolescents, who have not been able to adjust to the complex pattern of life as

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[51] SDCCd 5.

[52] "Children's Home Association Reviews Year of Achievement, July 9, 1927," SDCC, Box 5, Series IV-Scrapbooks.

[53] Durst, "Day Nurseries and Wage-Earning Mothers," 247-249.

[54] "Children's Home Association Reviews Year of Achievement, July 9, 1927," SDCC, Box 5.

[55] "80 Years of Service," *San Diego Children's Home Newsletter*, May 1968, Info File 64, Folder 16, SDHS.

we know it today. Not the delinquents . . . but the misfits."[56] The establishment of other day nurseries in San Diego allowed this change in direction. No longer the only facility in the city caring for children of working parents, the Home became the only facility to care for "the misfits."

Racial and Ethnic Monitoring

From the onset, the Home endeavored to admit only white children, not being racially - and ethnically-mixed until post-World War II mandates dictated integration. These early attempts to maintain an Anglo nursery segregated children of mixed racial or ethnic backgrounds from the facility. Father Ubach, the Roman Catholic priest for the parish in San Diego's Hispanic center (Old Town) organized the care of indigent, orphaned, or abandoned American Indian children prior to the establishment of the Sherman Institute in 1902.[57] Although technically not a part of his parish boundaries, he regularly traveled to the reservation areas located in the remotest sections of San Diego County, and steadily fought for educational resources for Indian children.[58] Children's Home records indicate that only one Indian child, a little girl, passed through their doors. The daughter of an unmarried domestic, the Home took her in on December 28, 1927. Three months later they transferred her to the Children's Home Society in Los Angeles where adoption procedures, though unusual, probably began.[59]

Likewise, the Home seldom cared for African American children. In the period 1888-1905, the register indicated the entrance of only two African American children. The first child arrived in November 1894, but the Home took no information on his stay other

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[56] "Everybody Helps, 1938," SDCC, Box 6, Scrapbook 1923-40.

[57] Miller, "The Blessings of Bureaucracy," 149. The Sherman Institute, named for Representative James Schoolcraft Sherman, Chairman of the House Committee on Indian Affairs and later Vice President of the United States from 1909-1912, became one of the largest non-reservation boarding schools in the country. It admitted 400 children when it opened in 1902, and by 1905 its enrollment expanded to 722 students.

[58] Ibid., 101-116; and Baksh McNeil, "St. Anthony's Indian School."

[59] SDCCd 86 in SDCC Box 10, Case Records 1925-29.

than that his board cost $8 per month.[60] In October 1902, a mother brought her very sick three-month-old baby girl to the Home and agreed to pay $10 per month for her care. The register noted that this woman, "worked out and unable to properly care for it." Sadly, the child died only ten days later.[61] Whether parents needed day care or more long-term assistance, workers usually contacted another African American family to see if they would temporarily board the child. The only other African American children noted by the Home arrived in 1931 after their mother died in childbirth and their father admitted the twin girls to the Home.[62] One Filipino couple described by the Home as "Brown," boarded their two sons at the Home in 1925 during the time the husband was stationed in San Diego. Perhaps his position in the Navy gave him an entree into the Home, but as Filipinos, this couple hardly represented the kind of parent the Home had become used to dealing with.[63] White children, no matter their ethnicity still occupied the beds of the Children's Home.

Missions for homeless Chinese children — usually owned and managed by Protestant interests — existed in Los Angeles and San Francisco, but not in San Diego. If Anglo authorities found a Chinese child in need of care, they would send her to one of these northern missions. While the Asian community in San Diego was small, the fact that no Asian children were cared for at the Home from 1888-1918 (and possibly to 1929) reveals the intense racism directed at Asians in California.[64] Part of that xenophobia included the fear of white slavery. As historian Carolyn Strange explained for the case of Toronto, the "exotic" food and dress of Chinese bachelors, "inspired racist fantasies of their mysterious powers over white women."[65] Progressive reformers (in San Diego as well as

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[60] SDCCa 151.

[61] SDCCa 380.

[62] *San Diego Union*, October 19, 1931 in SDCC, Box 5 Series IV Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 1923-1940.

[63] SDCCd 76/77. The father had been born in the Philippine Islands and the mother in Samoa. They had arrived in California in 1923 by way of San Francisco.

[64] This exclusion may extend to 1929. I limited my review of the 1919-1929 case records to a fifty percent sample and that sample did not reveal any Asian children.

[65] Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 155.

Toronto) included Chinese restaurants on the list of danger zones in which "foreign" men exploited young women.[66] As early as the 1870s, San Diego newspapers regularly published articles denouncing the Chinese practice of "owning" women, questioning the morality of both the "owner" and "property."[67]

Fortunately, the Associated Charities began to investigate claims of Asian seduction rather than naively believe them as truth. For instance, when in 1910 a Probation officer heard that a white girl was employed at Jim Lee's Laundry, the organization sent out an investigator. That visitor learned from the Chinese proprietor that a Mexican girl "comes to the door at intervals asking for work," and that he had employed her but did not know the girl's name or address.[68] Because this girl was not white, the Associated Charities lost interest (and concern) over this girl's well-being. In fact, they encouraged Mexican girls to earn wages. They regularly enrolled them in the Industrial School which trained young girls as domestics, and also encouraged them to participate in the Nurse Maids Classes at Neighborhood House.

But if they found an Anglo girl working— even an European immigrant — authorities registered a worry that equated wage-earning with criminality and delinquency. Two years later, on February 9, 1912, the Council raised uneasiness over Maddie Cantero, a young girl found ironing for a Chinese laundry located near her home. She earned $1 per day and worked three days a week. The Council suggested she take a position as a domestic in a private home, but Maddie wanted to work near her mother, who apparently was "satisfied" with her daughter's work arrangements. But the Council remained nervous. Their recommendation — "mother to be warned of danger and [Maddie] urged to find other work" — signaled their continued fear of Asian employers.[69]

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[66] Ibid., 138.

[67] One example can be found in *San Diego Union Weekly*, 5 October 1871. See also Liu, "Celestials in the Golden Mountain," 69.

[68] FSASD, 22 September 1910.

[69] FSASD, 9 February 1912.

No Mexican-heritage children entered the Home until 1897. From that time to 1905, only twelve Latino families came into contact with the facility. These statistics gradually changed as more Mexicans made San Diego their home. Whiteness often defined the ability of parents to secure institutional support and for authorities to intervene in a family's life. On January 20, 1902, police brought the Verdugo children to the Home after they found them "in a destitute condition deserted by a drunken father, the mother having previously deserted the father about a year ago."[70] Comments like these did not appear in the ledger for Anglo children, even if they had been assigned to the Home through a court order.[71] In an interesting case, the Court committed the Sanchez children into the Home and ordered their parents, Arturo and Gabriella Sanchez, to each pay half of the expenses accrued at the Home for the board of their three children. Isabel, Jaime, and Gabriella entered the Home on March 27, 1903 staying there for over a year until their mother remarried then claimed them on September 5, 1894.[72] In rare instances, the court ordered Anglo fathers to pay for board at the Home, but never demanded that of Anglo mothers.

Home workers overcame some of their racial or ethnic prejudices when faced with a sick or destitute child. For instance, when the widow, Leticia Ruiz, approached the Home on September 20, 1898 with her one-day-old baby, staff accepted the child, although the interaction was not entirely bias-free. They identified the child as only "Mexican infant" as opposed to the usual full name of both mother and child. Ruiz agreed to pay $3 per week — an exorbitant rate considering the average board was $3 per month — for the care of her baby. Ruiz returned ten days later to collect her child.[73] Leticia Ruiz and her baby disappear from the historical record so we can only imagine what arrangements this mother secured, but one option certainly included reaching out to her neighbors. The Ruiz

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[70] SDCCa 315/316.
[71] For example, see SDCCa 6, SDCCa 7, SDCCa 9, SDCCa 10.
[72] SDCCa 396/397/398.
[73] SDCCa 229.

address fell in the heart of Barrio Logan where Mexican families survived by helping out one another, especially in 1898 when the Mexican population in San Diego remained small (see Table 8 in Chapter 3).

Members of the Advisory Council understood and promoted neighborly assistance among Mexicans. When parents needed help, the AC would send their bilingual friendly visitor, Miss Primrose, into the barrio to convince Mexican parents to let a neighbor care for their children so they could either find work or admit themselves to the dreaded County Hospital.[74] Emilio Serna desperately needed a woman to help care for his eight children. He ran a tamale business, but when his wife died, he lost a valuable source of labor and support in the home. Reports from April 17, 1914 declared the Serna home "so dirty that it is a shame that he ever makes tamales." The Advisory Council discussed securing county aid for the widower and supervising the tamale business so he could make the rent on a cleaner house closer to his married daughter, "so that she can help with the children."[75] At their next meeting the Council decided to solve the problems of two Mexican families by connecting them to one another. They located a Mexican woman, Mrs. Wright, to care for Serna's house and children but she needed payment for her services. Wright's husband, an Anglo, had been admitted to the County Hospital "probably for the rest of his life," and the woman now needed to support herself. The Council agreed that since Mrs. Wright "can not earn her living on account of handicap no English," they would request that the County pay her a "small amount monthly through this office."[76]

Unlike with Anglo widowers, the Council did not consider boarding these children at either the Children's Home or in foster care. Two months later, the Council received

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[74] Examples include FSASD, 2 and 9 January 1914; 17 and 24 April 1914; 24 June 1914; and 10 November 1916. Minutes from a variety of meetings indicate that the Mexican community feared going to the County Hospital because of its reputation for poor care and horribly unsanitary conditions. For those San Diegans forced to use the facility, entry into the County Hospital signaled certain death for their family member.

[75] FSASD, 17 April 1914.

[76] FSASD, 24 April 1914.

reports of some of the Serna children, his daughters, "using bad language and stealing wood." Neighbors wanted the family out of the area, claiming they posed a bad influence on the other children in the neighborhood. As a solution, the AC proposed to canvas the area for a friendly visitor to counsel the family and to send the girls to the Industrial School "to learn to sew during vacation."[77] Language barriers may have kept children in the barrio, but the Council may have also been trying to contain poor hygiene, disease, and delinquency (either perceived or real) within the confines of the barrio rather than spread it among the general (and Anglo) population.

The case of Gloria del Castillo Griffen shows the influence of Anglo blood on securing services. Castillo Griffen brought her three-week-old son to the Home on October 13, 1902. She lived with her Anglo husband, Andrew Griffen, in the ranch area of Escondido. Located approximately thirty miles northeast of San Diego, a parent living in rural areas would not have sought out the Home's care unless faced with an extreme situation. Castillo Griffen agreed to pay $2 per week in advance for her son's care but the child died only two weeks later. The register did not indicate a sick baby nor why the parents left him in their care; it was difficult, however, to find medical attention in back country areas like Escondido, and the Griffen's may have sought out the Home because of its reputation for treating sick children.[78] Perhaps the fact that this child's father was white swayed Home workers to accept him as a boarder, but if ill at the time of entry, they would not have turned him away even if both parents had been Mexican. Caring for extremely sick children seemed to take precedence over racial and ethnic prejudices.

While the record does not tell us about Leticia Ruiz's partner, he may have also been white. Unions between Anglo-American men and Mexican or American Indian women occurred with some regularity in San Diego during the early to mid-nineteenth century, but by the 1880s, repressive attitudes toward intermarriage took hold in the

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[77] FSASD, 26 June 1914.
[78] SDCCa 378.

American West. Glenda Riley explains this phenomenon as a "paradoxical and destructive situation," that generated restrictive policies and laws dictating who could and could not marry. According to Riley, "not only did the West offer people the chance to marry others unlike themselves and then heap dishonor on them for doing so, but the West, which symbolized freedom of choice, carried repression of intermarriage to a new high in the United States."[79] Attempts to make Anglo the children of these marriages, thereby protecting them from racist taunts, became common practice as Anglo names took precedence over the Hispanic, just as the Spanish language became lost to future generations. Castillo Griffen's child carried a very Anglo name, Peter Henry. Children often learned English to translate for their Mexican mothers, and Mexican parents encouraged their children to learn English to the exclusion of Spanish. This Anglo heritage gave the Griffens entree to the home in ways that eluded most minority families.

By the early twentieth century, citizenship began directing the Home's admittance policies. At an Advisory Council meeting on October 17, 1913, the Home's representative, Mrs. Miles, informed the group that, "the Home does not want to take too many Mexican children" and that "applicants for admission must have been born in the United States or parents must have been naturalized."[80] This policy certainly was driven by the state of affairs in Mexico in 1913. In the middle of its violent revolution, Mexico drove hordes of displaced citizens into the United States. In fact, the Mexican-heritage community in San Diego actively raised funds for Mexican refugees by canvassing the city with a door-to-door appeal in the Spring of 1911.[81] The AC had approved of the relief effort, stating that, "the refugees are now among the poor of this county, " and agreed to help the Red Cross in purchasing tents for a Tijuana relief camp.[82]

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[79] Glenda Riley, *Building and Breaking Families in the American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 74.

[80] FSASD 17 October 1913.

[81] FSASD, 12 May 1911.

[82] FSASD, 19 May 1911.

But by 1913, the cause lost its appeal. Minutes from the January 2 and 9, 1914 meetings illustrate how Anglos worked to remove themselves from the internal affairs of Mexican nationals *and* Mexican Americans. In discussing the fate of four young Mexican American children, the Council decided that the best arrangement would be for a neighbor to care for them until their tubercular mother recovered from her illness and their unemployed father began earning enough wages to support the family. In similar situations involving Anglo families, the children would have been removed from their homes and sent to the Children's Home for boarding. Political turmoil as well as language barriers allowed these children to remain connected to their community, but it also left them vulnerable to hunger and homelessness.[83]

Travelers Aid Society of San Diego (TASSD) was one of the few organizations that openly extended their assistance to minority families, especially women and children. To be sure, TASSD consulted with organizations defined by race, class, and ethnicity but they did not turn a woman away from their initial contact because of her skin color or accent. For instance, the June 1924 report listed only three detailed descriptions of cases, and all three involved minority families. First, they assisted a "young, Indian girl" who after traveling to San Diego to visit a friend discovered that the family had moved. TASSD found temporary lodging for her at the King's Daughters Club. Their second project came when "one little Chinese woman and tiny baby" arrived in San Diego on the night train. No one appeared on the platform to greet her, so the TASSD worker spread word to Chinatown, and soon "friends" appeared from the Asian neighborhood to welcome her into the city. Thirdly, the Society "cooperated" with Associated Charities in the "investigation and care of a colored family in destitute condition" who recently arrived from Oklahoma.[84] In all three, TASSD connected the family to people (not necessarily agencies) from the travelers' racial or ethnic group. The AC, on the other hand, encouraged

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[83] FSASD, 2 and 9 January 1914.

[84] "Report for June 1924," TASSD, Box 2, folder 27 (Statistical Reports: Case Histories Circa 1924).

minority families to leave town. In the case of an African American mother and her two children, the Advisory Council asked the County Supervisors to pay for her transport to relatives in San Francisco. The Supervisors complied with the request.[85]

Yet, TASSD seldom challenged established channels of authority. On a warm Saturday in August 1921, the Society faced an interesting dilemma when a "young, Russian Jewess" and her two young boys arrived at San Diego's dock looking for her estranged husband. She informed the TASSD worker that the man deserted them in Shanghai, China, and they had journeyed to San Francisco to track him down. Once in California, the San Francisco Red Cross directed her to San Diego after they learned he was stationed on the Navy destroyer, *Twiggs*.

The TASSD worker phoned Civilian Relief only to hear a different account of the family dispute. Apparently, the man in question had been transferred to a recruiting station in Kentucky, but not before he told his superiors his version of the "desertion"; that his wife wanted to secure a divorce in order to marry another man, and that he wanted nothing to do with her. The Navy stood behind their soldier, informing TASSD that, "the best thing for her [the wife] was to roll up her sleeves and go to work or go back to China." Even though it was Saturday, the TASSD worker did not abandon this family, but rather, surveyed the character of this woman and assessed available options. According to the worker's report, a " 'condition' not a 'theory' " confronted her. That 'condition' included a mother who:

> . . . was a 'bartender' by profession, her disposition like a cyclone and her tongue untamed, but perfectly familiar with the vernacular corresponding to her profession and its environments.[86]

The best option seemed to be to connect this "cyclone" with a Naval authority who could explain the whereabouts of her estranged husband. The Society arranged for the woman to board the *Twiggs* to talk with the officer in charge. What transpired in that

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[85] FSASD, 29 June 1917.

[86] "Annual Report for 1921 (January 1, 1921 - January 1, 1922) - August 20, 1921," TASSD, Box 2, folder 25 (Statistical Reports, Circa 1922).

conversation is unknown; however, upon the mother's return to shore, she gathered her children and asked the TASSD worker to secure them immediate passage back to San Francisco. The worker summarized her interaction with this family with typical Protestant sentiment stating, "Americanization plus Christianization are the remedies for such cases."[87]

The fact that this woman was a "Russian Jewess" obviously played a role in the worker's assessment of the mother's character. That the worker did not contact Jewish Charities reveals an interesting phenomenon brewing in San Diego; that is, the power of the United States Navy. To this worker, the authority of the Navy reigned superior to all other agencies and employers in town. Moreover, in accepting the authority of the Naval officer, both of these women gave up any challenge to the husband's story. Nor did they fight to secure financial support from the Navy or the father. In the end, the Naval officer had more to do with deciding the fate of this woman and her children than the TASSD worker.

Women seldom stood a chance convincing a court that they could properly mother once their character had been publicly sullied. As Linda Gordon argues, the labels attached to single mothers in the early twentieth century morally defined the ways in which society accepted a mother's singleness. According to Gordon, "the widows and deserted wives claimed sympathy; the unmarried and divorced mothers, condemnation." Furthermore, Gordon explains that "the labels continued a tradition of distinguishing the deserving from the undeserving poor, and in the hands of the child-savers they operated to determine how the behavior of the women would be evaluated morally and what sorts of help might be offered."[88] This gendered evaluation, although, was not confined to mothers. Fathers seldom received society's blessing or even encouragement when trying to raise children on their own.

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives*, 89.

Questioning the Place of Single Fathers

Authorities believed that fathers should not attempt to raise their children without a woman's influence, often removing children from single fathers to uphold their ideas about maternal needs. But some fathers challenged these constraints and attempted to retain their rights to parent. The Children's Home was one facility that offered them this opportunity. Fathers used the Home to help them manage households when, through death or desertion, they no longer had wives to help them take care of home and children.

The exchange in September 1915 between Frederic Kallenberg, father of six, and Home personnel illustrates a typical situation:

> Father will pay whenever he can get work. Mrs. [K.] left her husband sick in bed with six children at home. Took over $300, checked out $25 that was in the bank. Sold the horse and wagon that Mr. [K] used in peddling fish and departed.[89]

Kallenberg never seemed able to fully provide for his children after his wife deserted him. While the records are unclear for three of his children, the youngest three fell in and out of the system throughout their childhood going from Juvenile Court, to placement in private homes, to the California Home Society and adoption. The Juvenile Court Law of 1909 gave judges the authority to place a ward of the court in "any home which he deemed desirable," whereby many judges turned to boarding homes, like the San Diego Children's Home, out of convenience.[90] The Home welcomed these children for a couple of reasons. First, because as the most needy children, they represented the mission of the Home; and secondly, as wards of the Court, the Home was assured payment of their care by the County. In the Kallenberg case, the County of San Diego paid for the care of all six children.

Kallenberg turned to the Home for help but in the end still lost his children. The family of Charles Scott fared a bit better. The record is sketchy as to how he cared for their four-year-old son after his wife died on New Year's Day in 1911, but by September 1918

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[89] SDCCb 6.

[90] Cahn and Bary, *Welfare Activities in California*, 31.

Scott turned to the Home to board his son. He worked at a lunch counter in San Diego and lived in Tijuana, making fairly regular payments of $10 per month for the boy's care. Three years later, on September 18, 1921, the Home discharged Henry (now fourteen years old) to his father.[91] The fluid nature of the United States/Mexico border allowed those in the area to move easily between the two countries; workers also found inexpensive housing in Tijuana. Why Scott lived in Tijuana remains unknown but his use of the Home is more clear. Scott probably boarded Henry at the Home so that he could attend American schools. Once he turned fourteen he was no longer required to continue his education, and Henry could enter the waged labor force to earn his own way.

When Leonard Martin's wife was admitted to the state mental hospital in the Fall of 1917, he approached the AC for help in "securing a housekeeper in order that his home may be maintained." That home included two young sons who needed attention while he worked during the day. The Advisory Council agreed that the best form of action would be to find an elderly couple for the Martin boys, otherwise, they advised, he needed to place the children in a temporary boarding home. The Council called the Probation Office and placed the children in foster care. This obviously pushed Martin into swift action. Within a week he found a new home and employed a neighbor woman to care for the children. The Council agreed that this home needed to be investigated and it kept a close eye on the Martin family.[92]

Whether it was AC surveillance or Martin's own realization about his situation, within days the family made yet another move and another arrangement for child care. This time Martin engaged a husband and wife to care for his children, but the wife soon reported dissatisfaction with the arrangement, and the Martin family again moved. One month after Mrs. Martin checked into the state mental hospital, the children had lived in

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[91] SDCCb 12.

[92] Documentation on the Martin family problems can be found in FSASD 28 September 1917; 5 October, 1917; 12 October 1917; 19 October 1917; 26 October 1917; 2 November 1917; 9 November 1917; 16 November 1917; 23 November 1917; 21 December 1917; 28 December 1917; and 4 January 1918.

four different homes with four different care arrangements. The Probation Officer stepped into the case and agreed with the AC that the boys needed to be permanently removed from their father. Because Martin waited tables at three different restaurants and presented "no definite plan" to the Advisory Council for the future of his children, he did not represent a model head-of-household. After an investigation found conditions in their home "deplorable," the Probation Office prepared to make the Martin children wards of the court.

Evidence reveals that Martin desperately sought to retain custody of his sons. He solicited the aid of a long-lost cousin who owned a small store near Logan Heights School. The woman willingly took the boys in, promptly burned their clothing and outfitted them with fresh clothes. Soon after, the AC reported that Martin lived downtown and the cousin had started "real training of the boys." By the first of the year, the Council noted that the children were "getting along very well." Investigations among neighbors found the children healthy and safe.

The Martin family dilemma exemplifies how some parents troubled society, especially parents rendered single through the incarceration, commitment, or abuse of a spouse. When the remaining parent was a father, the trouble became compounded. In the eyes of authorities, the Martin family redeemed itself only through the intervention of a female cousin. The case of the Marino family shows how angst over the parenting abilities of single fathers proved valid when Mrs. Marino died in March 1915. Anthony Marino tried to manage the care of his four children alone, but after five months he boarded them at the Home. On September 22, 1915, thirteen-year-old George and eleven-year-old Louis entered the Home with their six - and two-year-old sisters, Josie and Elena. All but Elena remained there for several years. The record is unclear as to where Elena went, but on November 21, 1915 the Home discharged her, possibly to an aunt who lived in the neighborhood and kept a grocery store.[93] Marino made monthly payments of $6.25 per child, plus he sent extra money for new shoes and clothing throughout 1915 and 1916; in

[93] SDCCb 39.

1917 his monthly payments increased to $8.95 per child. The childhood of the Marino children all ended differently. George did not leave the Home until he turned sixteen in June 1920; the Home discharged Louis earlier in October 1918 at the age of fourteen; and all we know of Josie is that on September 22, 1922, when she would have been thirteen, she was sent to the Detention Home.[94]

Unfortunately, "detention homes" and "reformatories" became a popular option for Progressive Era parents needing assistance with caring for (or rather, controlling) their adolescent daughters. Historians Ruth Alexander and Mary Odem have analyzed the often paradoxical solutions devised to govern adolescent girls and young women in New York and California who sought some control over their bodies, earnings, and environments.[95] Many of these girls came from single-parent families headed by mothers who needed their older daughters to help them with tending the younger children. The pattern of young, first-generation American girls trying to break away from the traditions of their parents holds true for Josie Marino, and may be the reason for her internment to the Detention Home.

We can only infer from their case history as to typical scenarios facing the Marino family, but in looking at their situation alongside the other families using the Home some possibilities can be identified. Before her death, Anthony Marino traveled the country with his wife looking work. Their sons were born in New Jersey, and their eldest daughter in Tacoma, Washington. A brick mason, Marino may have heard that steady work could be found in San Diego working on buildings for the Panama-California Exposition due to open in 1915. They migrated south to California in 1913 with their three children, where a very pregnant Helena delivered their daughter, Elena, on March 16, 1913. Two years later, Helena died leaving her semi-skilled husband alone with four children.

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Ruth Alexander, *The "Girl Problem,"* 103-122; and Odem, *Delinquent Daughters, 182*-184.

They had lived in the heart of San Diego's "Little Italy" which possibly played a role in Marino's ability to keep his children for awhile. Other widowers turned immediately to the Home for boarding, but Marino may have had the support of neighbors to help him tend to domestic duties. The timing of their children's entry into the Home coincides with tuna fishing schedules. When husbands returned from the sea, neighborhood women directed more of their attentions to their own families. Prior to 1920, the Home seldom admitted immigrant children, especially from Catholic or Jewish families, but they made an exception for Marino. In a sampling of forty-three households using the Home between 1909-1919, staff registered children from three Mexican households; two Italian families; two German households; and children from one family each of Irish, Serbian, English, Canadian, and Swedish. They also listed one Catholic and one Jewish family among their clients. Staff described an overwhelming majority of Home users, thirty households or seventy percent of the sample, as "American."[96]

The fact that Marino never missed a payment certainly worked in his favor; most parents had good intentions to pay regular board but seldom fully met this obligation. Self-sufficiency was an important component in judging the stability of families, and the race and ethnicity of a family usually defined the level at which self-sufficiency had or could be reached. For instance, the Home categorized Helen Jones' husband as insane when they admitted her two children. This twenty-eight-year-old Anglo mother used the Home from August 23, 1917 to May 14, 1921 to care for her seven - and eight-year-old children while she worked as a domestic.[97] Her husband was a German Lutheran and even though she practiced Catholicism, the Home accepted the children as an attempt to help this mother keep her troubled family together.

On September 28, 1917, widower Jorge Gonzalez asked the Associated Charities to help with "securing a home or housekeeper" for his three children so that he could

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[96] SDCCb cases.
[97] SDCCb 11.

work.[98] Gonzalez recently removed the children from a boarding home in Pasadena which he had used while he worked in the border town of Calexico.[99] But Gonzalez now intended to find work in San Diego and wanted his children closer to him. Agency workers, assured that the Santa Fe Freight Depot would hire him, began making arrangements to board the children in San Diego homes. Within days, the children were separated into two different households; the baby and four-year old with an "American" family and the oldest boy with foster parents. But this was not what Gonzalez had in mind when he asked for assistance in securing home or housekeeper. By October 12, the father gathered his children and secured his own day care arrangements with two young women who boarded children in the neighborhood. With the children in a familiar place chosen by Gonzalez, he could retain control of his children's welfare. The agency seemed wary of this situation and thought it "advisable to try to secure a home for this baby other than a public one of this sort."[100] For social workers in 1917, family day care homes did not represent a safe situation for children. To their mind, single fathers should use boarding homes or adoption.

But as evidenced by the Gonzalez family and others, San Diego authorities paid less attention to securing permanent homes for minority children. In September 1920, the AC decided that unless the newly-migrated Hernandez family became self-supporting "very soon," they should return to Calexico. Their situation came before the Advisory Council when the attendance officer for the public schools reported that the fifteen-year-old Hernandez girl was working instead of attending school. The Hernandez' insisted that they needed their daughter's earnings in order to survive, but the AC held firm on their decision that unless the family withdraw their daughter from paid employment they would be

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[98] FSASD, 28 September 1917.

[99] Calexico lies on the United States/Mexico border in Imperial County, which is directly east of San Diego County and runs to Arizona's southwestern line. Using the term border when describing Calexico is deceptive; since the border lines were created in the nineteenth century, people in Calexico have accepted the fluid culture of both United States and Mexican nationals moving in and out of the two countries.

[100] FSASD, 12 October 1917.

returned to Calexico. As Mexicans, the Hernandez family had little recourse with the AC. Once their daughter had been reported absent from school, they had been targeted as bad parents and considered open to reprimand. The irony is that the San Diego public schools invested little energy in educating Mexican and Mexican American youngsters. But once authorities became aware of this teen in the workforce, they issued a warning that if the family wanted to live on the United States side of the border, they would have to live up to Anglo standards of self-sufficiency. The AC records do not indicate where the Hernandez girl worked for wages, but during this period, she most likely spent her day at a laundry, in an olive factory, or in one of the fish canneries.

The Hernandez case shows the influence generated by Neighborhood House programs and staff in just six years. Consider the differences in the treatment of the Hernandez family and the Mexican girl found working in the Chinese laundry in 1910. Prior to Neighborhood House, authorities cared little about the welfare of Mexican people, but by 1920, out-of-school daughters — no matter their race or ethnicity — triggered fears of delinquency. However, the fact that she was Mexican posed political problems that did not exist in 1910. The Mexican Revolution and U.S. economic pressures had changed forever the openness of the U.S./Mexico border. No longer could residents move freely between the two nations, and U.S. officials now used the threat of repatriation to keep "problem" families in line. Border agents represented another group that began to regulate the movements of working-class families, and by the 1930s they presented a strong voice in the San Diego community.

Concerned Experts and the Effects of Professional Change

A representative of the Junior League's national office declared in her 1932 field report that residents of San Diego did not work for a living but rather lived on retirement incomes.[101] Typical of outsider observations, her assessment that, "San Diego is not an industrial city," reflected an image — that of a quiet resort town free of smokestacks, disease, poverty and crime — that would have made its turn-of-the-century leaders happy. But in reality, most San Diegans in 1932 struggled along with the rest of the nation to make ends meet. Unlike most of the United States, however, natural resources, such as its protected harbor, helped leaders ease their economy back to normal. The League representative's description belies the presence of the United States Navy, home port for the Pacific Fleet, with thousands of sailors — both commissioned and enlisted — moving their families to the area. By 1930, one-third of San Diego citizens claimed the Navy as its employer. Thousands more worked in industries that supported the military which included the expanding aviation market, ship-building, and munitions manufacturing.[102]

But the fact that a seemingly sleepy resort town would attract the attention of a nationally-placed civic organization, like the Junior League, is noteworthy. By the 1930s, both private organizations and professional associations concerned with social welfare took notice of San Diego activities. As noted earlier, the publishing of *The Pathfinder Social Survey* in 1914 sanctioned the use of professional expertise in San Diego agencies and institutions. Yet, the city's isolation from major academic institutions and a hesitation to adequately pay the few professionals willing to relocate to San Diego, kept the region's organizations tied to amateur, albeit well-meaning, staffers who lacked the expertise to install comprehensive social and educational programming.

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[101] "San Diego, California: General Characteristics," AJLA, Box 68, folder 688.

[102] Major employers included The Ryan Company, Consolidated Aircraft Corporation, and Pacific Marine Construction Company. See Robert Eberhardt, "Concrete Shipbuilding in San Diego, 1918-1920," *Journal of San Diego History* 41, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 111-135; Lucinda Eddy, "War Comes to San Diego," (esp. 55-76) *Journal of San Diego History* 39, no. 1 and 2 (Winter-Spring 1993): 51-120; Killory, "Temporary Suburbs;" and Lotchin, *Fortress California*, esp. 23-41; and Shragge, "A New Federal City."

The first attempts to professionalize came in 1928 when the Community Welfare Council of San Diego, the San Diego County Welfare Commission and the City of San Diego contracted with University of California sociologist, George B. Mangold, to analyze the effectiveness of the city's welfare programs. That study, *Community Welfare in San Diego,* pinpointed a number of areas in which San Diegans could (and should) improve their management of social welfare, including non-familial child care.[103] But unlike the work done by the Kings, Mangold's research sparked little action at the public level in terms of child care. Both *The Pathfinder Social Survey* and Mangold's study had implicated lax city structures as the problem and called for a move toward the inclusion of professional health and social workers in public and private agencies.[104] Yet, soon after publishing *Community Welfare,* city officials relegated a low priority status to the study's suggestions as their immediate concerns became dealing with job cutbacks and an ever-growing transient community. Following the cue of the Committee on Unemployment in Berkeley, in May 1930, San Diego leaders organized the publicly-funded employment agency, the San Diego Industrial Coordination Bureau (SDICB).[105] According to Cahn and Bary, the SDICB marked the first public/private partnership for the city; but, in fact, San Diego long welcomed public funds to help mothers, specifically in the form of Mothers' Pensions and Smith-Hughes funding for maternal education.

Professionals entered the child care arena at the same time that social workers took over administrative functions of health and welfare organizations, a shuffling that generated a professional order among these services in the late 1920s. Isabella Hammack exemplifies an early childhood educator who helped set a professional tone for San Diego's child care program. Like Progressive-era reformers Edith Shatto King and Helen Marston, Isabella Hammack had strong ties to San Diego and chose to return to her home after

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[103] Mangold, *Community Welfare in San Diego*, 130.

[104] Shatto King and King, *Pathfinder Social Survey*, 4; and Mangold, *Community Welfare in San Diego*, foreword.

[105] Cahn and Bary, *Welfare Activities in California,* 218.

earning a Masters degree in Child Development from the University of California. After graduating from San Diego's Normal School, Hammack taught in El Cajon (a town on the eastern border of San Diego) for one year, then in the San Diego school district for twelve years. Later, she entered the University of California in 1925 where she specialized in Parent Education, Child Development and Child Teaching. With her Masters degree in hand, she taught Child Development and supervised students at the nursery school at Mills College before returning to San Diego to teach at a private nursery school.[106]

San Diego State College hired Hammack in 1931 with the specific assignment of organizing a child development program. Her expertise guided the inclusion of the demonstration nursery school at the 1935-36 Exposition as well as the transfer of the program to State College upon the Exposition's closure. State College gave her a leave of absence from 1945-47 when the California State Department of Education appointed her to supervise the Childcare Centers of California.[107]

Clearly, the presence of State College changed the pool of available professionals willing to stay in the area to work as early childhood educators, public health nurses and social workers. Sociologist Dr. Edna Hawley Seamans represents another example of this influence. In January 1936, Hawley Seamans reported to the Family Welfare Service Association of America (FWSAA) that she was encouraged by her review of records at the San Diego Chapter of the American Red Cross. She wrote, "It is the first organization in the city whose records I have read which I feel comes up to your standards."[108] Hawley Seamans also explained that she successfully convinced the San Diego Junior League to

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[106] The nursery school, Francis Parker, developed into a prestigious, private school that continues to educate children from kindergarten through high school. For a complete history of the school, see Ethel Mintzer Lichtman, "The Zest for Learning: Founding and Early Years of Francis Parker School," *Journal of San Diego History* 39, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 171-199.

[107] Hammack retired from State College in 1957 as Associate Professor of Education. See Heather Kufchak interview of Isabella Hammack and Beryl Campbell, November 5, 1985 in SDSU Oral. For information on the California Children's Centers, see W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson, "Child Care, Government Financing, and the Public Schools: Lessons from the California Children's Centers," *School Review* 86 (November 1977): 5-37.

[108] Letter from Dr. Edna Hawley Seamans to Sara Alice Brown, 24 January 1936 in FWSAA, Box 41, folder (American Association of Social Workers, SD Chapter, SD, CA).

hire a trained social worker as director of its nursery. Sara A. Brown, Regional Field Secretary for the FWSAA, responded to this news with some hesitation. She wrote:

> After all, we are more concerned with what people are thinking about than most anything else and someday we shall hope some of the seeds which are being sown in the region of San Diego will bear fruit and that professional case work will come into [its] own.[109]

Child caring became one of the areas in which San Diegans turned to professionals for advice; however, they did not wholeheartedly accept the counsel. The Junior League contracted with the sociologist to study their day nursery. Hawley Seamans found the facility completely void of professional standards but the League met her recommendation to bring a professional on board with little enthusiasm. As a member of the San Diego Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers, Hawley Seamans certainly believed that she possessed the authority to make such judgments. However, not all associations agreed on the quality of expertise among professionals. Whereas Hawley Seamans enjoyed a solid reputation with the FWSAA, the San Diego Chapter of the Junior League found her study of their day nursery "completely worthless."[110] In her report, Hawley Seamans argued that the Junior League needed to update its day nursery procedures by employing a matron with case work expertise rather than continuing to rely on Junior League volunteers to handle intake and family investigations of mothers. The League did hire a woman recommended by Hawley Seamans, but her tenure was short-lived because the "League had difficulty with her because of her personality."[111]

Organizational control seemed to be key to a professional's success in San Diego. The same Junior League heeded the study of Lucile Marshall, a graduate of the University of California and former FERA worker, who recommended closing the nursery. The difference between Hawley Seamans and Marshall proved to be a perception of authority and value of credentials. Dr. Hawley Seamans possessed the degreed authority of her

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[109] Letter to Edna Hawley Seamans from Sara A. Brown, 5 February 1936, in ibid.

[110] Page 3 of Field notes, "San Diego-Children's Field-Day Nursery," AJLA, Box 68, folder 688.

[111] Ibid.

education and connections with nationally-organized social work associations. But her contacts with San Diego State College, particularly its Sociology Department, linked her to a "radical" element rumored to harbor "communists."[112] The conservative and traditional-minded San Diego Chapter of the Junior League considered her connections dangerous. The society-conscious League, on the other hand, sanctioned Marshall. Moreover, the League wanted to control the flow of information into the community, therefore, they wanted to choose the professionals who studied their programs. In fact, one year earlier in August 1935, the League considered the findings of two other professionals who suggested that the nursery broaden their scope to care for children who did not qualify for care in the WPA nursery.[113] These women — the social worker at the Helping Hand Home, Miss Margaret Norwich (a position funded by the League), and the director of the Federal Nursery School, Ethel Sturgis Mintzer — did not pose a threat to Junior League members.[114]

These proclamations of authority reveal the ways in which professional methodology gained currency among San Diego agency officials, but they also reveal the tension that arose between various organizations regarding control of resources. All of these experts were adequately qualified to study the situation of the Junior League Day Nursery. The difference lay in the critique of League programs. First, Hawley Seamans came to the League with an agenda to professionalize the volunteer group while the League sought out Marshall, Norwich and Mintzer to validate their work in the day nursery. Second, Hawley Seamans studied the nursery workers while Marshall, Norwich and Mintzer studied the more innocuous capacity of the nursery. Third, Hawley Seamans resided in San Diego and knew its weaknesses whereas Marshall and Norwich, recent newcomers to the area, had little personal knowledge of the city, thus remained silent when

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ethel Sturgis Mintzer was also the principal of the Francis Parker School, whose teachers educated many children of Junior League members.

it came to criticizing personalities. In the end, the League's priorities focused on the legitimacy of the organization rather than in providing adequate resources for San Diego parents.

But professionalizing persevered, and board members, elected officials, and salaried agents began to heed the warnings of university-credentialed advocates who feared that unprofessional do-gooders were meddling in affairs best left to trained personnel. Rather than provide volunteer power to operate child care programs, the Junior League closed its program in 1937 and turned toward funding investigations of child welfare. They paid for the services of social worker Patricia Hosford to review the work done at the four major institutions providing child care — the Children's Home, the Boys' and Girls' Aid Society, the Helping Hand Home, and Resthaven Preventorium — to assess the quality of care offered at each facility.[115] Hosford, a graduate of Chaffey Junior College and the University of Southern California where she received a Bachelor of Arts and certificate in social work, specialized in social welfare and child psychology. Before coming to San Diego she led "character-building groups" for the International Institute in Los Angeles, handled family case work for the Los Angeles County welfare bureau, and family case work with the Los Angeles Traveler's Aid and the federal transient service.[116] Certainly by 1937, San Diegans looked to educational credentials as a way to legitimize child care workers.

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[115] SDCC, Box 6, Scrapbook 1923-40. Resthaven Preventorium was a medical facility for tubercular children.

[116] 1937 *San Diego Union* article found in SDCC, Box 5, Scrapbooks, 1923-40.

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Confidence in trusting professional input was a slow process in San Diego. In general, advocates remained isolated from standards established by national professional societies like the Family Welfare Service Association of America (FWSAA). Moreover, faculty at local institutions of higher learning did not have access to teaching innovations like the preschool laboratory until fifteen years after its implementation at other schools. The laboratories that many college and university curriculums included in the 1920s did not become part of San Diego State College until 1936. Consequently, the city continued throughout the early twentieth century to operate along "traditional" lines of religiously-informed advocacy rather than to fully integrate the accepted forms of case work management or methods in early childhood education. Rather than investigate the political agendas of San Diego officials involved in policy making, leaders of professional organizations like the FWSAA often chastised non-credentialed San Diego staff members for the lack of a coordinated social service programs in San Diego. Note the 1937 response of Margaret Wead, FWSAA secretary of membership, to the application for membership of Helen Johnson of the San Diego Associated Charities:

> She and the work she does has no semblance of professional quality. However, members of her Board are beginning to see that and are eager for FWSAA help so let us follow this lead and see where it goes.[117]

Executive Secretary of the Associated Charities, Eleanor Mead, also became the target of negative performance reviews by national associations. Those reviews influenced the board of San Diego Associated Charities who took radical action. They agreed that Mead needed professional treatment and in May 1945 had her committed to a sanitarium. During her stay, they completed an executive search and when she returned to work, Mead was met with a request to resign and an offer of two months severance pay. Mead had little recourse: while she had courted the FWSAA national office for years as a

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[117] Margaret Wead memo to Sara A. Brown, 9 January 1937, FWSAA, Box 41, folder (Associated Charities, San Diego, CA).

professional, they described her as a "tall, very pleasing person who seems not very sure of what a family program is all about."[118] Obviously her physique attracted more attention than her capabilities in the job.

Detroit's road to professionalization was swifter and less controversial than San Diego. By the 1920s, Detroit agencies began to depend solely on the advice of experts, creating much tighter control — hence regulation — of working-class families in the city. The next chapter traces the ways in which psychologically-informed ideas came to dominate social case work in Detroit by the end of the Progressive Era. This trend resulted in a number of families losing control of the daily care of their children, a consequence that created increased tension between care providers and the experts trying to assist them.

[118] Memo from Mary E. Lucas (Field Secretary of FWSAA), 27 June 1940, FWSAA, Box 41, folder (San Diego, CA, 1940-41).

Chapter 5

"DEFINITELY FEEBLE-MINDED": RESPONSES TO "PATHOLOGICAL" PARENTS IN PROGRESSIVE-ERA DETROIT

"W. was examined at Psychological Clinic May 21, 1919.
Diagnosis: Definitely feeble-minded — middle grade type but rather low to have responsibility of her children. Should have social nursing rather than institutional care.
W. at this time was earning $10/week working four days a week."

— Case Records,
Associated Charities of Detroit, 1919[1]

Advances in psychology, psychiatry and medicine at the turn of the century produced wide-spread interest in the composition of the American family.[2] Experts devoted themselves to promoting characteristics found in Anglo-American and middle-class families, insisting that only male-headed households created truly sound children. Professionals understood any deviation from this standard as problematic, turning by the 1910s to psychology for explanations to justify parental behaviors which stretched beyond middle-class sensibilities. In this chapter, I turn to the growing urban center of Detroit to understand how these sciences influenced the lives of people in need of professional guidance. Using case record evidence from families routed through the Detroit Associated Charities (DAC) prior to 1920, I explore how solutions for rectifying problem families lay

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[1] UCS Cases, folder 7, Case 4212. See footnote 3 for an explanation of this source and how I use it throughout the chapter. Case 4212 involves a mother subjected to psychological testing because of chronic child neglect.

[2] The scientific achievements and mentoring of psychologist G. Stanley Hall produced a new field of scholars who took on the peculiarities of the family. Hall and his students blended psychology, pediatrics, education, and nutrition into the project of creating a well-adjusted and educated child. With the appearance in 1909 of the English translation of *The Century of the Child* by the Swedish child advocate Ellen Key, Progressive reformers found international ground on which to argue for change in the lives of American children. For analyses of these advances see Hamilton Cravens, *Before Head Start;* and Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

in the interrogation of the psychological state of Detroit clients rather than in efforts to improve their material condition.[3]

Whereas psychology may have helped white middle - and upper-class families bring order to their lives, this diagnostic advance did little to solve the problems faced by poor whites.[4] On the contrary, it subjected them to "moral condemnation as parents" in ways not experienced by more privileged parents.[5] Many poor families came under professional scrutiny because of the absence of a father; others out of necessity because they left their infants in the hands of children. Whatever the reason, those families which could not fit into the prescribed model of the American family became easy targets for professional surveillance, sometimes resulting in a diagnosis that labeled them as pathological.

Pathological parents drew a good deal of attention from those experts who worked with families in the early twentieth century. Their diagnosis — "definitely feeble-minded" — became one way to identify parents who had diverged from the Anglicized standard as bad, perverted, and even contagious. My research uses that diagnosis to show how the newly-accepted practice of psychological testing helped to persuade family case workers of

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[3] Many of these cases were published by sociologists Arthur Evans Woods and Harry L. Lurie as *Trouble Cases: A Study of the More Difficult Family Problems and the Work Upon Them of the Detroit Social Agencies* (Detroit: Detroit Community Union, 1919). This report is located in the UCS Studies and Reports Collection, Box 7, Reuther Library [hereafter *Trouble Cases*]. The authors generated report data from the pool of 30,000 families recorded by social welfare agencies in a single year in Detroit (August 1916 to August 1917). They chose to review the cases of families who were known to at least five agencies during that year. That limitation yielded 752 families for a total of 4,635 records. Family names of cases used in this report were changed by Woods and Lurie, and I use the fictitious name created by them when I refer to a family in the report. Only a sampling of cases (those that most represented a particular issue) made their way into *Trouble Cases*. I have reviewed the raw data in which this report was devised and draw from some of those cases in my analysis. Those files are located in UCS Collection, Series III, Box 19, Case Studies 1919 [hereafter, UCS Cases]. In order to maintain the confidentiality stressed by Woods and Lurie, I have also created fictitious names for these families. In all cases, I supply the case number as assigned by the Associated Charities recorder.

[4] I emphasize the racial category "white" because as a rule, social workers (who were primarily white and middle-class) during this period focused their attentions on white families whether native-born or immigrant. Racist assumptions by many social workers led them to believe that African American, Asian, and American Indian households could never live within the parameters of an Anglo world, thus they seldom invested professional energy toward these families.

[5] Julia Wrigley, "Children's Caregivers and Ideologies of Parental Inadequacy," in *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, ed. Emily K. Abel and Margaret K. Nelson (Albany: State University of New York, 1990), 291.

a dire need for monitoring the behavior of some of their clients. In the process, the biased results of psychological tests stripped some individuals of their right to parent.

Professionals believed that only Anglo parents could fulfill the standards devised for proper American family life; a belief that justified an intricate web of agency intrusions into the lives of these families and ignored the stressed condition of hundreds of other Detroit families. Nevertheless, working-poor Anglo parents — no matter their ethnicity— became targets for expert regulation. Impoverished parents trapped by such a professional gaze held little authority in which to rebel against these attentions. Case workers noted the behaviors of immigrant families in particular, hoping that monitoring parenting skills would further indoctrinate these newcomers into "American" culture. Unfortunately, professional intervention failed to enact solid improvements in the health and welfare of families caught in the social welfare system. The fact that during the Progressive Era no cohesive interaction existed among child- help agencies in Detroit ensured that parents in need of guidance seldom benefited from that expertise.

Yet, as child guidance historian Margo Horn astutely points out, an analysis of the interactions between parents (particularly mothers) and social workers illuminates a "complicated relationship which included both elements of *social control* and *genuine therapeutic* dimensions."[6] With the dangers of the urban city — either perceived or real — in their minds, social workers enacted regulatory measures against parents out of sincere hope that it would save children from abusive situations. They made multiple visits to homes with the desire to help and not necessarily with ideas of intruding upon families. The end result, however, may have resembled more what social commentator Christopher Lasch described as a professional undermining of parental authority.[7]

Many parents accepted the authority of child study professionals almost unconditionally, altering long-held beliefs about how to provide for, educate, and safely

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[6] Margo Horn, "The Moral Message of Child Guidance, 1925-45," *Journal of Social History* 18 (Fall 1984), 33.

[7] Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York, 1977).

attend to the health of their children. Some parents, because of their position in society, had no exposure to child care experts. Other parents, such as recent immigrants from eastern and southern European countries, simply ignored advice that came from strangers. Access to training and an acceptance of that training varied dramatically within urban settings; therefore, experts came to rely more and more on reports by social workers who interacted with families. In their eagerness to assist child-study professionals, evaluations by social workers often included inaccurate or incomplete information about a family's situation. These reports ultimately guided the judgments made by psychological and medical personnel of a parent's capacity to mother or father.

Horn cautions against interpreting this guidance as a basis for understanding impoverished lives. Her research shows that families under surveillance were not as easily manipulated as their contemporaries and some scholars have assumed. According to Horn, "social workers often became embroiled in internal family conflicts in which they supported the mother as a way to establish a working alliance with her, while the mother 'used' the social worker to pursue her own agenda or strategy for her family."[8] That is, the "ideology" which argues that social workers undermined various cultural expressions of family and parental authority may be overstating the social worker's manipulative power over her client. Horn found that the actual interventions of social workers had "little impact" on most clients in their charge.[9] Similar evidence appears for Detroit.

The Problematic Authority of Detroit's Social Workers

Psychological testing evolved during the Progressive Era as a way for many social workers and public health nurses to evaluate and categorize their clients. By placing the socially unstable — from hardened criminals to sexually-charged adolescent girls — in the category of "feebleminded," those professionals using mental illness as their touchstone

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[8] Horn, "Moral Message," 33.
[9] Ibid.

could explain away society's inadequacies. Soon they found that they could attach the label "feeble-minded" to everyone who stepped outside the bounds of acceptable behavior.

In her study of psychiatric thought and practice in the early twentieth century, Elizabeth Lunbeck explains how social workers turned to "psychotherapy to give them the theoretical consistency, a necessary basis for professional autonomy, that simple casework could not provide."[10] As female professionals and regular visitors into working-class neighborhoods, social workers gained entrance to the home life of the underclass. This entree allowed them to observe first-hand the troubled and conflicted domestic arrangements that working-class families struggled within and against.

Psychiatrists, however, began to object to these over-simplified categorizations, claiming that any individual with a college degree could tag an individual as "feebleminded." Social workers in particular became targets for psychiatric disdain. In their quest to maintain a superior professional edge, psychiatrists argued that a proper diagnosis had to account for an individual's "subjective emotions and feelings."[11] These characteristics, however, were not included in tests that simply assigned an intelligence grade. Thus, in order to properly diagnose, psychiatrists insisted, testing instruments must be re-evaluated and psychiatrists must be the only professionals making those changes. They would then remain the only professionals qualified to make the designation "feeble-minded." Psychiatrists turned from the precise and easily identified category of feeblemindedness to the "more malleable" and "usefully but dangerously indeterminate" diagnosis of psychopathic.[12] That more exact categorization qualified the significance of a psychiatric rather than psychological diagnosis, securing the positions of psychiatrists as scientific and medically-trained authorities rather than simple executors of time-honored tests.

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[10] Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion*, 291.
[11] Ibid., 64.
[12] Ibid., 65.

Psychiatrists did not aspire to helping whole families because they believed that the problems connected to "so-called family cases" were a result of "difficulties traceable to the peculiarities or deficiencies of one of its members."[13] Psychiatrists fixated on the individual which fundamentally differed from the work of social workers, who as a professional group, were dedicated to preserving the family. To achieve intact families, social workers analyzed the mental capacity of certain family members, often correlating illiteracy (or as in the case of immigrant families, knowledge of English) with "feeble-mindedness." Their strategy to keep families intact involved advising mothers to stay with abusive husbands. In this way, social workers contributed to the further breakdown of a person's psyche: instead of helping a woman rid her family of an abusive head-of-household, social workers saw the solution in subjecting the mother to psychiatric testing.

Consequently, social workers became the key executors of those simplified tests objected to by psychiatrists. Lunbeck explains their involvement in the tracking and containment of pathology as a movement of the 1920s deeply connected to society's changing understanding of womanhood — particularly married womanhood — and "its auxiliary, domesticity."[14] To the social workers in Lunbeck's study, "the condition of the home mirrored the condition of the marriage," and from that logic, their parenting (or rather, mothering) skills.[15] Homes with poorly planned meals, unclean rooms, and soiled clothing seldom housed manageable children. It became a major project among social workers to improve the home by teaching wives and mothers how to cook, clean, and tend to babies. The State backed up this agenda by providing Mother's Pensions, and later, Sheppherd-Towner funds, to remove mothers from the workplace to help keep the married woman domestic. It is this authority to guide the homes of the working-class and poor into a facade of middle-class comfort that became problematic for those involved at all stages of their project.

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[13] Ibid., 280.
[14] Ibid., 291.
[15] Ibid., 283.

While the tenets of professionalism guided Detroit social workers more stringently than those agency workers in San Diego, efforts by Detroit workers to incorporate professional standards into their methodology remained troubled and uneven into the 1930s. In a 1919 report produced specifically to address the problem of professional failure in Detroit, sociologists Harry L. Lurie and Arthur Evans Woods declared that, "the efficacy of the efforts of the social agencies in dealing with employment and economic problems leaves much to be desired."[16] The sociologists chastised the Detroit social work community for a number of oversights which caused "defects" in a diagnosis.[17]

Lurie and Woods singled out the "common failing" by social workers to utilize medical and psychological clinics to confirm disease and/or abnormal behavior.[18] These clinics did not become popular until the mid-1920s, thus the Detroit situation mirrored the dilemma in most urban settings that found social workers taking on the bulk of the responsibility for treating clients. However, the sociologists found this dedication irresponsible, concluding that "poor diagnosis is one of the chief defects of social work, vitiating or destroying the value of a great deal of effort undertaken" to heal families and individuals.[19] Poverty caused many of the problems so misdiagnosed by social workers. Ninety-eight percent (or 736 households) of the 752 studied families earned an insufficient income to sustain a healthy living standard in urban Detroit.[20] In most cases, these

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[16] Woods and Lurie, *Trouble Cases*, 23.

[17] Ibid., 58. Oft-cited problems included, "hasty and superficial judgment upon the given data"; "biased viewpoint of the social worker"; "failure to recognize obvious problems by inference from data"; "failure to use community resources such as mental and health clinics for the determination of specific defects"; and "lack of appreciation of customs and standards of special groups, [such] as immigrants."

[18] Ibid., 60.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 44-49. Poor health presented the largest percentage of problem cases (47.9%), and included physical illness (37.1%), "handicapped" wage-earners (2.1%), mental diseases (4.7%), and industrial and other accidents (6.1%). Domestic difficulties were cited as the next largest source of problems with 34.8% of the families fitting this category. Unemployment proved critical in 29.4% of these families. The institutionalization and death of the primary wage-earner posed problems for 21.2% and 20.0% respectively, while alcoholism affected 15.9% of the families. Old age created problems in only 1.0% of these troubled families. Insufficient data caused the authors to admit that they did not know how many families were primarily affected by low wages.

families experienced more than one of the above conditions, with many families demonstrating all of the conditions.

The misunderstanding by professionals of the economic realities of workers' lives often led to misguided advise. For instance, an inadequately investigated case could guide a social worker into equating absent husbands with desertion. Many fathers traveled to other cities, such as Buffalo, Pittsburgh or Cleveland, to find work, with the understanding that they would return once the economic slump ended. But professionals convinced working-class wives to file charges of neglect against their spouses even when the wife knew the whereabouts of her absent husband. Social workers only extended this advice to white women because their racist assumptions led them to believe that African American households seldom contained a male head. In fact, African American men were incapable of providing for a family. Consequently, African American mothers on their own raised little concern for white social workers. On the contrary, these wives and mothers seldom appear in the Associated Charities records.

In the case of white clients — whether native-born or immigrant — social workers generally sided with women in trying to make men responsible for supporting their families. One woman charged that her husband, who ran away with a neighbor, took their adolescent daughter without her permission. The mother took their four other children to her brother's house but he threw her out, demanding that her husband take responsibility for the brood. Not only had the father deserted the family, he allegedly committed adultery and kidnapping, serious allegations for a social worker to handle alone.[21] But instead of calling in law enforcement, the social worker on the scene mediated the domestic dispute by encouraging the woman to file charges of neglect against her husband. Within days, the girl returned to Detroit without her father who claimed he simply left the city to find work

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[21] In June 1913, Congress passed the "White Slave Traffic Act," sponsored by Representative James R. Mann. In an effort to curtail prostitution, especially among white adolescents and young women, the Act prohibited the transportation of women across state lines for immoral sexual relations. Kevin J. Mumford analyzes the influence of the Mann Act in, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

in the Buffalo factories.[22] Since the father accepted neither blame nor responsibility, the mother was forced to seek the services of a boarding home. A reinvestigation one month later found the children with their mother again who was "keeping house for a divorced man."[23] She informed the investigator that she planned to divorce and re-marry. In this case, bringing charges of child neglect helped little in this family's progress. In fact, the professional interaction offered no influence over the direction of their lives.

In another case, a woman's mother complained to a social agency on behalf of her daughter, stating that her son-in-law failed to support his family because he drank too much. That support role fell to the older woman who complained about the strain it put on her. Without investigating, the agency advised her to file child neglect charges against her son-in-law to the Juvenile Court. Meanwhile, the husband's parents complained to another agency that their daughter-in-law was insane and should be committed to an institution. Again, an inadequate investigation (which only extended to the man's parents) convinced agency personnel to surmise that "the woman is out of her mind and in need of institutional care." They then directed these people to the "investigator of insane cases" for the Poor Commission.[24] However, the woman in question sought out her own assistance by contacting a probation officer of the Police Court. That officer advised her to take out a warrant for non-support against her husband. In the end, the files indicate that no one of these plans was initiated because the family had "reconciled" on their own.[25] This family could have benefited from an integrated case plan, yet, because none of the agencies connected with one another, no professional action came their way.

Many families received little or no feedback on their interaction with authorities. When they did, it often contradicted with earlier attempts to make the family self-sufficient. Admitting their inadequacies to deal properly with the problems of Detroit's poor, social

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[22] UCS Cases, folder 9, Case 6922.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Case 774, *Trouble Cases*, 58-59.
[25] Ibid.

workers set an agenda to remedy their mediocre success rate. They realized that in the absence of a central clearinghouse, duplication of effort plagued any plan to make families more self-sufficient. Therefore in 1917, the Research Bureau of the Associated Charities began to systematically collect data to prepare reports on the efficiency and quality of programs among public and private welfare agencies. Their data included general statistics regarding the social and economic conditions in Detroit. By January 1918, organizations came together under the administrative umbrella of the Detroit Community Union (DCU). Over forty organizations used the DCU as a way to "streamline the provision of social, health, and recreational services" offered to Detroiters.[26]

Designed to eliminate multiple visits to client homes by social workers and public health nurses, these organizational changes did little to reverse inadequate or mistaken diagnoses of family situations. Incidents regarding child care, or lack thereof, represented one of the most misunderstood areas between social workers and parents. Social workers called to investigate the homes of Detroit's destitute, soon learned that many wage-earning mothers left their young children either alone or in the care of siblings too young to properly attend to babies and toddlers. Wage-earning mothers — whether married or single — became vulnerable to acquiring the label "feeble-minded".[27] Indeed, mothers who left their children unattended were not crazy but desperate to provide for their family. Gershom Settlement staff noted that while locking in children was a known practice throughout the city, it seemed to be particularly "exaggerated" in the Gershom neighborhood.[28] In a neighborhood surrounded by factories, mothers who locked in their

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[26] UCS Series III Finding Aid.

[27] Whereas prior to World War I social workers remained determined to create nuclear families among their client population, by the 1920s removing children from problem homes became standard practice in the social work arena. In her study on domestic violence, Linda Gordon explains that society regulated the parenting skills of single mothers far more rigidly than married mothers with present fathers, arguably out of a concern for the children. But that regulation did not always result in the best environment for the child. Gordon argues that "despite insistence on the vital importance of mothering, child-savers frequently recommended institutionalizing children rather than granting aid to their mothers." See Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives*, 107.

[28] Untitled report, October 1931, page 4 in FW Box 1, folder 3 (History 1884-1945), file - October 1931.

children hoped to protect their young from the dangers of the street. Unfortunately, these same women failed to recognize the danger located in their own homes. Not until the late 1920s did Gershom Settlement organize a day nursery specifically to relieve the abuse endured by children locked into their homes by well-meaning mothers. Consequently, many children in center city suffered from accidents in the home which left them maimed or bruised.

Society could not condone a mother's decision to lock up her children — even for safety sake — therefore social workers used that practice to declare some mothers unfit and even pathological. Consider how family authorities dealt with the Davidov family when their little boy died from a fire that swept through their home on February 24, 1916. Locked in that morning by his mother, the boy never had a chance to escape the flames that erupted in the kitchen. His burnt body served as a horrible reminder of the desperate acts taken among working-class families to earn a living. Perhaps in an attempt to save the other children in the house, social workers sent them to the St. Vincent de Paul Boarding Home in Detroit, and subjected the mother to psychological testing at the Psychological Hospital in Ann Arbor. Declaring her insane, Mrs. Davidov spent one month under hospital treatment before returning to Detroit claim her children.[29]

Evidence from the DAC, however, reveals that pathology had little to do with working women locking their children in homes. Rather, the use of locked doors and windows backfired on well-intentioned mothers hoping to guard their children against the dangers of the street. Many parents simply had little or no access to adult supervision for their children, but social workers and others in authority usually overlooked these kinds of obvious impediments to a child's safety. Instead, they focused on scientific explanations for child neglect.

By the 1910s, judgments against working mothers gained currency in the courts, forcing Detroit parents to suffer the punitive consequences of leaving children either

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[29] UCS Cases, folder 10, Case 7912.

improperly or completely unattended by an adult. The Court removed children from homes, committed fathers to county jail and ordered mothers to be tested for psychological disorders. Certainly some of these actions were justified. For example, when the Davidov boy burned to death, authorities removed all the other children from the home, subjected the mother to psychological testing, and investigated the family dynamics to understand why a mother could be so careless. They discovered that on September 20, 1915, city officials warned Davidov that her practice of locking in her children had to end. Davidov either did not understand the seriousness of their warnings or simply chose to ignore them, but in any case, five months later the fatal accident that killed her son threw this woman into a dark depression. Authorities were blunt in their assignment of blame: "Child burned to death through carelessness of W."[30]

A closer look at this woman's history reveals a deeply troubled life. Theresa and Joseph Davidov moved to Detroit in 1902 but never seemed able to secure stable living arrangements. Joseph seldom worked and spent several months in the House of Corrections on charges of non-support, while Theresa peddled wares on the street to support the family. By the time the Associated Charities recorded their history in 1919, their older children (ages eighteen to fourteen years) had returned to Syria to live with grandparents while their eleven, eight and six year-old-children remained in Detroit with their parents. Joseph Davidov never played a positive role in the children's lives. Since July 22, 1915, when he served his first sixty-day sentence for non-support, Department of Public Welfare (DPW) investigators monitored Davidov's behavior by interviewing his neighbors. Their reports noted Joseph's "refusal" to support his family as well as spousal abuse, a situation which his wife timidly verified to investigators.

The fire sparked a rebellious streak in their eleven-year-old son who ran away from the boarding home, targeting him as unmanageable, thus delinquent. The December 18,

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[30] Ibid.

1916 file read, "[Joshua] getting to be bad boy."[31] Authorities interpreted his behavior as delinquent, but more than likely, the boy simply wanted to live with his mother. The final record, April 23, 1919, shows St. Vincent de Paul staff requesting that DPW also test the father's "sanity," but when they arrived at the Davidov home, Theresa informed them that she had no knowledge of her husband's whereabouts. The case closed with neither a test nor a resolution.

The Davidov case starkly illustrates the problems explained in *Trouble Cases*; that social workers devoted time and energy into *documenting* the abnormal acts of parents rather than investing resources into devising and implementing coordinated plans for *adjusting* problem families.[32] Social workers may have hoped to change a family's environment, but if that plan remained a theory, it did little to tangibly guide a family into normalcy. Social workers on the case never created a treatment plan for the Davidovs, and no professional leadership surfaced to take control of any suggested adjustment. So many agencies became involved with the Davidovs that one could easily lose track of the social workers assigned to the case, making it difficult for the family to form any bond or trust with authorities assigned to help. Likewise, no worker stepped forward to declare a special interest in the Davidovs. Consequently, it took the unfortunate death of a child to push social workers into action, yet by that time, their steps proved futile.

Economic security and child neglect

Social workers learned of a troubled family because a neighbor, school teacher, or health professional reported noticing an "abnormality" in the family. Their observations included the absence of a male around the house, pupils who attended school without shoes, or children entering health clinics with obvious signs of neglect such as burn scars, bruises or malnutrition. In fact, child neglect became the key indicator that a professional

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Beverly A. Stadum focuses on this dilemma in, "A Critique of Family Case Workers 1900-1930," 73-100.

needed to intervene in the family dynamic. But to professionals, wage-earning by mothers did not constitute a valid reason for neglecting one's children. Historian Mary Odem demonstrates how Progressive Era social workers and juvenile court justices spared little compassion (or even understanding) for the problems inadequate child care arrangements posed for working-class mothers, especially single mothers. Many of these women depended on adolescent daughters for child care. If that daughter was arrested for delinquency, the mother lost not only a child to the court but a valuable economic resource. As Odem explains, "single mothers were caught in a double bind: they relied more heavily than other parents on court assistance with disobedient daughters, but they were also more vulnerable to court criticism for poor child-rearing methods."[33]

In a California case that committed a teenage girl to a reformatory, the courts refused to recognize how her mother — an unmarried woman with four small children in the household — depended on her daughter for child care. The mother desperately fought to keep her daughter from being committed to the House of Good Shepherd, pleading that, "I need [Martha] for the baby girl and I want her now. In the morning I have to go at half past eight and I don't think it is right to have my three-year-old baby left with the boys." Her plea fell on deaf ears, and as Odem points out, the decision by the Court to confine Martha "only worsened the conditions under which this family lived."[34]

Authorities in Detroit reached similar conclusions about parents who crossed their path. The Hackett case exemplifies how economic hardship could trigger a slew of harmful labels by social workers, which in turn, affected the assistance given to needy families. The Hackett file also shows the total lack of cooperation and communication among Detroit's child-help agencies which represented the critical flaw plaguing Detroit social welfare. A Department of Public Welfare investigator sent to the Hackett home on May 3, 1919 found undernourished, shoeless children who, according to neighbors, fended

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[33] Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*, 182.
[34] Ibid., 183.

for themselves during those hours that their mother performed day work.[35] Noting this child neglect, the investigator ordered the mother, Katie Hackett, to take a mental examination at the Psychological Clinic. In the minds of caseworkers, a neglectful mother must be mentally deficient, or "feeble-minded" as clinicians termed the condition. In truth, waged labor and an absent husband helped Katie Hackett earn the label "feeble-minded."

Detroit welfare agencies knew well the turbulent lives led by Katie, her husband Charlie, and their children. Over a span of five years, workers from eleven different Detroit agencies tried to direct the Hacketts but all failed to influence the family in any meaningful way. No one condition or authority weighed more or less heavily, but in combination they created what historian Ruth Alexander describes as a "dynamic of reform" among educators, social workers, and families.[36] This "three-way affair" brought together parents, neighbors, and professionals in the project of caring for children. The Hackett's lengthy history with social workers illustrates how those persons in positions of authority refused to recognize the constraints surrounding the Hackett family.

In November 1917, social workers discovered the unsupervised children. At that time, Charlie Hackett was serving a 65-day sentence in the House of Corrections for a conviction of non-support of his family. From interviews with neighbors, case investigators surmised that Katie Hackett apparently knew about day care resources in the city, yet chose not to use them. A review of their file indicates that months earlier, in April 1917, she seemed more in control of her life. Having secured a warrant of non-support against her husband, Katie found regular day work (where is unknown), and began taking her four children to the day nursery at Neighborhood House. Yet, by early November, this was no longer part of the family routine. On November 12, 1917, social workers charged Katie Hackett with child neglect when they found ten-year-old Harry in charge of his six-year-old brother, two-year-old sister, and infant brother. They immediately removed the

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[35] UCS Cases, folder 7, Case 4212.

[36] Alexander, *The "Girl Problem,"* 103.

children to the care of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP). Within weeks of the November investigation, the neglectful mother took ill, confined to bed at the Receiving Hospital (November 27, 1917). The children continued to board at the SSVP until their mother's release two months later.[37] Once committed to the Receiving Home, an agency stepped in to care for the children, but circumstances reached desperate before Katie Hackett received any substantial form of public assistance.

In 1919 when the neighbor registered the neglect complaint against Katie Hackett, she perhaps viewed the mother as ill prepared to deal with an alcoholic, unemployed husband and hoped her complaint would bring some order to the chaos next door. Or, as is more likely, this neighbor was fed up with the domestic disputes fought between the couple and decided to take her own action. In fact, the Hacketts had a lengthy history of seeking mediation for their problems through social agencies. Katie Hackett first used the courts on May 13, 1914 when she secured a warrant for non-support against her husband for deserting the family. In September 1914, she was granted a $4 per week Mothers' Pension which the Court revoked on March 5, 1915 after learning that her husband had returned home. This scenario played out for years: Charlie would desert, Katie would file a non-support warrant, he would serve time in the House of Corrections, and then return home where the cycle of domestic discord would be repeated. At times, Katie refused to let Charlie back into the family, in other instances she would "give him another chance."[38] He regularly abandoned his family, often disappearing for months on end. Charlie Hackett never held a job longer than one month, even though, according to casework investigators, his training as a butcher gave him the capacity to earn "good wages as [a] skilled meat cutter."[39]

As British immigrants to the United States (1889) and migrants to Detroit (1899), the Hackett's relationship illustrates the kind of behavior detailed by historian Ellen Ross in

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[37] UCS Cases, folder 7, Case 4212.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

her study of working-class family culture in London.[40] Cockney couples lived in a sexually separate world that expected wives to perform all the domestic labor and child care for the family while husbands provided financial support. Ross found, however, that women, not the stereotyped male controlled the purse strings. Husbands customarily turned over their pay to their wives who in turn made the decisions about how and when to spend it. In order to make ends meet, women often took sewing and wash into their homes or left the home to work for others, earning a low daily rate. When husbands imbibed too heavily in gin or other alcohols, wives refused to let them back into their homes until they sobered up and swore to find work. Neighbors and female kin supported a woman in maintaining this control within her household, which often led to messy courtroom scenes, bar room brawls, and street fights between couples. According to Ross:

> [D]espite their physical, economic, and legal disadvantages, wives were ready to stand their ground. The result was a culture where husband-wife violence was incredibly frequent, where pubs were regularly invaded by angry wives, where husbands cheated wives, wives stole from husbands, and music halls nightly unfolded new chapters in the domestic struggle for power.[41]

While not natives of London, the Hacketts may have been accustomed to this turbulent dynamic. Katie, an Irish immigrant who was thirty years old in 1919, earned a weekly wage totaling between $8 - 10 doing day work three or four times per week. She vacillated between refusing to live with Charlie (October 1, 1915) and "giving him another chance" (June 1, 1916). Apparently, Charlie reconciled with his wife after her confinement in May 1916. After his release from the House of Corrections on May 13, 1916, he was seen "at home caring for her" on May 26. A June re-investigation found Charlie working three days each week. A short-lived reunion, Katie once again filed a bill of separation on January 29, 1917 claiming her husband deserted three weeks prior.[42]

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[40] Ellen Ross, " 'Fierce Questions and Taunts' " Married Life in Working-Class London, 1870 - 1914" *Feminist Studies* 8 (Fall 1982): 575-602.

[41] Ibid., 577.

[42] UCS Cases, folder 7, Case 4212.

Welfare and court records indicate that desertion and claims of non-support formed the basis of interaction between this husband and wife; however, Linda Gordon's study of domestic violence shows that sometimes women used punitive action against their husbands as a way to maintain their marriage bonds, and not as an escape from their spouse.[43] Prior to the Depression when men lost their jobs in manufacturing but women continued to work in the service sector, women in abusive domestic situations often were desperate to keep their husbands as providers. The stigma attached to domestic violence kept bruised and beaten women from bringing criminal charges. Instead, they issued charges of non-support rather than admit that their husband brutally beat them. The Hackett's marriage played out these working-class dynamics with Katie providing the primary source of income with her day work, and Charlie offering the primary source of discontent with his drinking and desertion.

By May 1919, social workers decided that Katie Hackett's behavior was abnormal. They ordered a psychological examination to discover the cause of her bad maternal skills with the hope of rectifying her tendency to leave her children unattended by an adult. The fact that she continued to reconcile relations with her wayward husband also provoked concern among social workers, an interesting difference from what Lunbeck found among social workers in her study. The diagnosis, "definitely feeble-minded — middle grade type" categorized the capacity of this woman to mother as "rather low to have responsibility of her children." Suggested treatment included "social nursing rather than institutional care."[44] The stress of raising four young children without the reliable financial and physical presence of her husband certainly had more to do with her frantic and disorganized house, yet that logic escaped the social workers on the case. They did recognize, however, that institutionalizing her represented too harsh a treatment, recommending instead that she be monitored in her home by social workers.

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[43] Gordon, *Heroes of their own Lives*, 260-261.
[44] UCS Cases, folder 7, Case 4212.

In truth, Katie Hackett demonstrated remarkable fortitude against overwhelming odds. Poverty, ill health, and lack of any family support pushed this mother into making poor decisions about the care of her children. Regardless, she in turn used the system to attempt to secure wages from her husband and fought to keep her children out of institutions like boarding homes. The creation of the Juvenile Court provided a means for some women to seek assistance for the care of their children. As a case in point, Katie Hackett continually used this route to secure her family's financial situation. When a mother's non-support charge was supported by Juvenile Court, it allowed her the opportunity to then apply for Mothers' Pension funds. If charged, a father could be sentenced to the House of Corrections (HC) for up to ninety days, during which time the wages he earned while in the HC were turned over to his wife. For many reasons, not least of which included fear of spousal revenge, women remained reluctant to take this route. The more likely scenario found agencies precipitating proceedings against charges of domestic abuse and/or negligence, then trying to convince wives to carry through with the action.

This was not the case with Mrs. Hackett, who regularly asked the Juvenile Court to issue a warrant for Charlie's arrest. Final contacts with the Hacketts found Katie employed and Charlie absent from the family — apparently, because his wife would not allow him in the home.[45] The Department of Public Welfare discontinued relief on July 26, 1919, and by September 1919 the family, sans Charlie, had moved to Highland Park, perhaps to be closer to work opportunities in the burgeoning automobile industry.

This family's situation reveals a number of important child care dilemmas faced by many wage-earning parents in the early twentieth century. First, economic survival and not mental insufficiency caused Katie Hackett to neglect her children; however, the failure of those in authority to consider a wide range of causes led to a miscued diagnosis and contributed to the continued regulation of this impoverished family. The direct link

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[45] Ibid., Re-investigation entries of July 9 and 11, 1919.

between economic security and child neglect remained surprisingly elusive to the social workers investigating the Hackett family. Without her husband's help, Katie Hackett needed to leave her children unattended in order to earn an income for the family. But social workers perceived her decision to leave an older child in charge as the misguided judgment of an inept, even bad, parent.

Secondly, we see how mothers could sometimes use state authority to their advantage rather than be victimized by that power. Women such as Katie Hackett used their neighbors and the legal system to protect themselves and their children. While we do not know the nature of Katie Hackett's relationships with her neighbors, we can surmise that they knew her well enough to periodically comment on the state of her family life, or, to take an interest in the welfare of the Hackett children. That neighborly interest initially led the professionals to her family.

Thirdly, settlement houses played critical roles in the lives of Detroit workers; not just as care providers through their day nurseries, but also as monitors of proper parenting behavior. In the situation of the Hackett family, Neighborhood House staff noticed that the Hackett children no longer attended their nursery, notifying authorities to investigate why. Fourth, and perhaps most insidious, are the ways in which well-meaning reformers failed to understand the multiple layers of distress endured by some families, thereby, turning the reality of day-to-day living into medical pathology.

The Chene family illustrates the kind of disorganized albeit well-meaning treatment meted out by case workers. John and Mary Chene, French-Canadian parents of nine living children, faced charges of child negligence in 1917, and again in 1918. Canadian immigrants, the Chenes had lived in Detroit since their marriage in 1896. From that time, Mary Chene gave birth to children every two years. She regularly took in wash to support the family while John Chene did little else but drink. By the Fall of 1910 when social workers began digging deeper into the Chene situation, they noted that the care of seven children left little time for Mary to devote to wage-earning or domesticity. In fact,

according to social workers, her domestic skill fell far short of accepted guidelines for cleanliness and proper nutrition.

John Chene's chronic unemployment and alcoholism plagued the couple and caused social workers to eventually diagnose their situation as "economic and domestic difficulties of a subnormal family."[46] Yet, the original assessment by the first investigator to visit the Chene home in July 1910 described the seven children as "very bright and healthy looking children." At that time, Mary Chene informed the investigator that her husband had heart trouble and thus could only work a little, making it necessary for them to rely on the Sunshine Society for food.[47] It was their several-month dependency on the Society that prompted the Associated Charities to get involved. While the investigator initially filed a positive report, upon further interviews she changed her opinion of the Chene household. Using a typical social worker tactic, the investigator turned to the Chene neighbors for the "real" story.

Those neighbors scoffed at the idea of John Chene suffering from heart trouble, countering that he was a "big, lazy drunkard." They also informed the investigator that the "bright " and "healthy" children she had observed often could be seen in the middle of winter wearing nothing but the thinnest of clothing.[48] By December 1912, reinvestigations found Mary ready to deliver her eighth child, and the other children as filthy as the house. Although the Society continued to distribute aid, it also called for further investigations which extended to teachers at the children's schools and the family priest. All confirmed that the children's behavior began to deteriorate.

Unemployment, sickness, and pregnancy continued to define the Chene life; by the summer of 1915, they could add eviction and charges of child neglect to their list of concerns. It took five years of agency surveillance for the courts to heed an investigator

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[46] *Trouble Cases*, 10.
[47] Ibid., 7.
[48] Ibid., 8.

and register a complaint of neglect against Mary and John Chene.[49] At that time, five of their children were under the age of twelve, were probably under the care of their second eldest daughter, fifteen-year-old Lavina. From July 1915 to September 1916, the Investigative Bureau of the Associated Charities committed social workers and visiting nurses to the Chene family in an effort to "rehabilitate" them.[50] Their eldest child, a son, who suffered from tuberculosis was admitted to a sanitarium where he stayed for eight months. They found work for the eldest daughter, Marie aged sixteen at the time, and sent Lavina to the Detroit Psychopathic Clinic for testing where she was diagnosed as "feeble-minded and epileptic." Clinic staff recommended to Mary Chene that her daughter be committed to the Lapeer State Home and Training School. The mother refused.

Lapeer became a site for authorities and parents alike to rid themselves of problem adolescents. The State of Michigan established Lapeer State Home and Training School in 1893 under the authority of Public Act 209. Originally named the Michigan Home for the Feebleminded and Epileptic, the facility was isolated on an 898-acre tract of land in Lapeer, about fifty miles northeast of Detroit. In 1914, most of the epileptic cases moved to a new institution located in the even smaller and more distant community of Cairo, leaving room at Lapeer for "delinquent" adolescent girls.[51] But not all parents consented to the removal of their teenage children, as evidenced by Mary Chene's response to the order.

Investigators of the Chene home discovered "wretched" living conditions and sent in a Visiting Housekeeper to instruct the mother on proper hygiene. The visitor's August 7, 1916 report reads:

> Home back of packing-house. Stench very bad. Lavina said that her mother had gone to look for house, as their present home was very unhealthy. Baby had been sick from heat; head and face covered with rash. Visitor asked if mother had ever been to clinic. Lavina said 'No.'[52]

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[49] Ibid., 10.
[50] Ibid., 11.
[51] Information taken from *Guide to State of Michigan Archives*, 1034-35.
[52] *Troubled Cases*, 11.

Two weeks later the housekeeper returned but still did not find the mother at home. Her August 21, 1916 entry notes: "Baby seems well, but children all very dirty. Lavina washing. Woman gone out because house was too hot. Children did not know when she would be back."[53]

The housekeeper attempted to maintain contact with the Chenes but they moved without telling her, and it took her several months to locate them. When she did find them, Mary Chene resisted the housekeeper's help. The worker persisted in trying to educate the Chenes by focusing on the problem of unemployment. She sent the two elder girls, Maria and Lavina, to the cigar factories and the previously tubercular son to the Poor Commission to secure work. The husband seemed a hopeless case.

In 1917, the Social Service Department of the Poor Commission stepped in. Its social worker immediately turned to non-support as a solution to relieving the Chene poverty, insisting that Mary file against her husband. Found guilty, John Chene was sent to the House of Corrections for ninety days, freeing the Poor Commission to financially support the family. They also helped the family move, but the housing conditions remained deplorable despite the continued work of the visiting housekeeper. No amount of teaching effort by the housekeeper or other social workers could solve the key problem of chronic unemployment by those in the family capable of earning wages.

The record is unclear on the reasons for filing the neglect charge, but it came at the same time in which authorities discovered that Lavina had married. The fact that Lavina, the daughter diagnosed as "feeble-minded and epileptic," married in November 1917 provokes an interesting assessment of the dynamic between the Chene family and the numerous social workers with whom they interacted. Did Mrs. Chene balk at the suggestion to send her daughter away because she depended on her for child care or income; or did she understand that in accepting the workers' diagnosis, she would essentially be turning her daughter over to the state, forfeiting all future control over her

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[53] Ibid.

daughter's well-being or labor? Did she encourage the marriage of Lavina as a way to keep her within the family?

The charges of child neglect should not have surprised the Chenes because two years earlier they were warned to pay closer attention to their young children. In July 1915, a worker from the Associated Charities Investigation Bureau (IB) visited the Chene residence at the urging of the SSVP. They found a confused mother and "very poorly clad" children without shoes or stockings. During the IB visit, Mary Chene told the investigator that only a few days earlier she had been visited by a woman from another society who threatened to, "take complaint out in court unless the woman took better care" of the children.[54] The threat must have exasperated the mother, who responded to the first investigator that she had " . . . only recently been confined and that the children had to take care of themselves while she was sick."[55] Mrs. Chene understood the family financial situation as solvent, stating that, "they owed only their rent, . . . had been receiving no help, . . . and [she] had been working only at odd times."[56] After this encounter, the IB and SSVP collaborated in trying to find work for the woman; however, the family was evicted for non-payment of rent, rendering suspect Mrs. Chene's statement about their financial situation. Case workers were pressed to understand the economic conditions in which this family operated, so instead medicalized their situation with the term, a "mentally subnormal type" family.[57]

In November 1917, the visiting housekeeper assigned to the Chene family figured the family budget and found "a large deficit for a minimum standard of living." The Associated Charities assessment, however, blamed the social agencies for never ordering a "thorough mental and physical examination of all members of the family."[58] Commenting on the case, *Trouble Cases* author Lurie and Wood agreed that, "cases of this type are not

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[54] Ibid., 10.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 12.

infrequent. They all illustrate the difficulties of dealing with families obviously of a subnormal type."[59] The authors also admitted that while, "it did not appear that an effective solution of the family's troubles resulted, constructive treatment was attempted and contact with social agencies prevented complete disintegration."[60]

This attitude, to isolate the mental and physical capabilities of a client, disengaged professionals from the social conditions dominating the lives of the poor. True, tuberculosis prevented many otherwise healthy men from supporting their families, but professionals simply could not accept the fact that many healthy men or women refused to work, opting instead to drink, gamble or walk away from their familial responsibilities. Elizabeth Lunbeck explains how social workers refused to blame husbands for brutality toward their wives and children. Instead, they insisted that wives must try harder to please their partners by cooking special meals and, in some situations, indulging the sexual perversions of their spouses. For some social workers, wives and mothers became the problem and the solution to domestic discord.[61]

While female-headed families received much of the regulatory attention, case workers also applied the labels "feeble-minded" and "mentally subnormal" to two-parent households. The Muelle family exemplifies this kind of diagnosis. Johann (thirty-five years old) and Helga (thirty-six years old), immigrated to Detroit as young adults from Austria in 1903. Their five children ranged in age from nine years to infancy.[62] Welfare officials first met Johann when on January 5, 1915, after three months of unemployment, he applied for relief on behalf of his family. He found work in May, but within four months, Johann returned to the welfare offices desperate for public aid. That visit caused authorities to direct him to the City Physician for a health examination. Finding Johann tubercular, the Physician immediately committed him to Eloise, the center of Wayne

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 12-13.
[61] Lunbeck, *Psychiatric Persuasion*, 281-286.
[62] UCS Cases, folder 8, Case 5475.

County's residential relief.[63] Tuberculosis plagued the Muelles for more than four years, with both husband and wife moving in and out of Eloise, causing them to lose their children to the Juvenile Court system.[64]

The Muelles wanted to care for their children in their own home but their fight to conquer tuberculosis only complicated their struggle to keep the children. Health officials simply could not understand why the Muelles would risk exposing their children to the often deadly disease. The persistence by the Muelles to care for their children led Board of Health authorities to send Johann and Helga to the Psychiatric Clinic which diagnosed them both "feebleminded." Psychiatrists labeled Johann "low grade mentality" and recommended that he be institutionalized. On August 27, 1919, the Court also sent two of their children to the Detroit Sanitarium, a move that pushed the children into running away from the institution. After the children's second escape, the sanitarium refused them any further care. In the minds of the Muelle children, the institution provided shelter and food, but it did not replace the warmth or comfort offered by their parents.

In November 1919, the Department of Health laid down their mandate: no more aid unless the Muelles commit themselves and their children to institutions. The Department of Health assessment that the Muelles were a "public menace" revealed the way the medical community both understood the effects of tuberculosis and a parent's wish to keep a family intact: medical personnel saw the Muelle's wish to have their children at home as pathological. Removing the children from the seeds of the problem became the only solution available to both the Muelles and to authorities. Twelve agencies worked on this case but none offered any concrete assistance to the Muelle family.

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[63] I thank Maria Quinlan Leiby and John Halsey, both with the State of Michigan Bureau of History, for making sense of the Eloise sanitarium history for me. Eloise not only took in the County's tubercular patients, but many residents judged mentally incapacitated found themselves committed to the sanitarium.

[64] In September 1916, city officials judged all five of the Muelle children wards of Juvenile Court and assigned their care to the SSVP where they boarded until February 1917. In June when a visiting nurse found Helga eight-and-one-half-months pregnant, she ordered that the other children be made wards of the court. The Court agreed and again committed the children to the SSVP home for two years.

It seems as though the immigrant status of the Davidovs, Hacketts, Chenes and Muelles — highlighted by their "foreign" accents — triggered regulatory responses by case workers. Of course, some two-parent households needed official intervention, yet, these same households often eluded the attention of authorities, especially if they were native-born, white parents. Case 146 illustrates how some parents escaped professional attention for too long. Unemployment and the birth of their fifth child sent a husband and wife to the DAC offices in 1907. In her report, the DAC investigator characterized the husband as "shiftless and of low mentality" and the mother as "untruthful"; certainly not qualities that would earn parents glowing recommendations for assistance.[65] Three years later, the Juvenile Court sent the couple's oldest son to the Lansing Reform School for larceny, charged his parents with child neglect, and removed the two youngest children from the home by placing them in temporary boarding homes. Within six months the couple again found themselves in trouble, having been accused of neglecting a young nephew who lived with them. The Court closed the case after returning this boy to his mother; but in 1911, both parents were charged with larceny, child neglect, and child abuse. This was not the first larceny charge sustained by this father, nor would it be his last. Unfortunately, the crime-ridden state of their household trickled down to their daughter. Charged with sexual delinquency in March 1914, Juvenile Court put the fourteen-year-old adolescent on probation and sent her home.

This family moved from one crisis to the next with no parental guidance and little real intervention from public health and social service authorities. In December 1914, an automobile hit their ten-year-old son. Rushed to the Children's Free Hospital, he stayed there for several months, during which time doctors discovered that he suffered from "chorea and congenital syphilis." The Social Service department tried to maintain treatment for the boy's condition once he was home, but the family refused to cooperate. The Court removed the younger children from the home, but they released them to their parents (on

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[65] Case 146, *Trouble Cases*, 23-25.

probation at the time) just six months later. But abuse and neglect continued to harm the children: in June 1916, the adolescent daughter on probation miscarried a pregnancy fathered by her uncle; the Board of Education Clinic found their thirteen-year-old boy to be three years "retarded"; and the two youngest children were made wards of the Court. By March 1917, the Poor Commission ordered tests from the Psychological Clinic for the children. Clinic personnel diagnosed the youngsters as "feeble-minded," and ordered the children committed to the Lapeer Home and Training School. Their order also included testing for the entire family but the family left Detroit before these instructions could be executed.

This out-of-control father and mother needed the testing that the Psychological Clinic could provide, yet, it took officials ten years to impose the order. The authors of *Trouble Cases* believed that an obvious, "lack of jurisdictional authority over subnormal adults," proved critical in this case. Ultimately, this inability to control criminal and abusive behavior contributed to the continuing disorder within this family. Perhaps their nativity contributed to their chaos; professionals simply refused to believe that such a family needed monitoring. On the exterior they represented a model family (white and nuclear) which created a sort of screen against the abuse carried out by these parents and extended family members.

Some families were more successful in their interactions with professionals. Clara Valende first appealed to Detroit Public Welfare on October 22, 1914 when her husband deserted her.[66] The mother of four small children and seven months pregnant, she secured a warrant of non-support against her husband. Because he returned home within the month, the Court never served its warrant, but the Valendes continued to use the services of Detroit agencies. After the birth of her baby, Clara Valende requested relief from the DPW. Within two weeks of that request, two of their children died (from what is unknown) and DPW paid the funeral expenses. During the five years recorded in the case

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[66] UCS Cases, folder 10, Case 7035.

files, alcohol led to many disruptions in this family, including her husband's saloon fights and incarceration for violation of prohibition laws. Clara's husband frequently deserted his family, and just as frequently, Clara filed warrants for non-support. In December 1918, an investigator discovered their twelve-year-old daughter at home instead of in school. When Clara could find work, she turned to her eldest daughter to provide child care but the Court did not look favorably upon this arrangement. On May 5, 1919, the Juvenile Court charged Clara with child neglect. An investigation cleared her of those charges, finding that Clara cared "for her children as best she could" during the times she labored outside the home.[67]

The file does not indicate who cared for the children, but it does suggest that social workers saw a ray of light for the Valende family, especially for Clara. Perhaps they were encouraged by her tenacity to prosecute her husband for non-support. In the minds of DPW workers, Clara recognized that her husband's alcoholism and abuse caused the disorder within her family. If he had been a steady and stable provider then she could have been a model mother. The fact that she carried through with the punitive action of sending her husband to the HC showed social workers that she understood his failure as a husband and as a father. On October 17, 1919, authorities sent him to the HC for ninety days (the severest sentence a man could draw), and the DPW and Visiting Home Association "made plans to act together on constructive work" with the family.[68] Unlike the previous family, Clara Valende was not complicit in the abuse meted out by her husband. On the contrary, she pursued regulation hoping that it would create a peaceful space for her family. Because of Clara Valende's willingness to invite regulation into her life, she did not carry the label of "feeble-minded."

These families demonstrate how tight the bond became between charges of child neglect and economic stability. Yet, professionals insisted on medicalizing problems which

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

remained grounded in the socioeconomic conditions of the family. Even institutions designed to assist families socially, culturally, and economically — like the settlement house — became partners in categorizing families as "feeble-minded." The settlement house day nursery was the institution most involved in this complicity.

The settlement house served many functions to urban dwellers, not least among them the provision of free or inexpensive day care. Thus, the settlement house gave day nursery staff direct access to families with unsteady home situations. As providers of child care, these workers interacted first-hand with working-class children, observing them away from their parents. When a child regularly arrived hungry, dirty or improperly clothed, settlement house workers would contact a welfare agency, such as the Visiting Nurses Association, and request an investigation of the child's home. In this way, the settlement house became the channel through which many families entered the cycle of monitoring, regulation, and interrogation by case workers affiliated with welfare or judicial agencies.

The actions of resident workers at Franklin Street Settlement typified this kind of involvement when in 1906 they registered concern to the Associated Charities about a family who qualified for free day nursery care. They reported that the family frequently moved without paying rent, and that the father was "drunken and abusive."[69] Case 392 included seven children, ages seven months to thirteen years, a father of German descent, and a mother of Canadian-Scotch descent who lived on the edge of complete poverty and poor health. Eight years after the Franklin Street notification, the Associated Charities heard from the East Side Settlement who also believed that the children needed nursery care. These settlement house reports initiated a series of child neglect complaints that led the parents into the court system and their children into boarding homes and juvenile delinquency hearings. When employed, the mother worked as a cook and the father as a machinist; however, this woman gave birth every other year leaving her and her children

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[69] Case 392, *Trouble Cases*, 13-15.

vulnerable to the acts of an abusive husband. Without the attentive eye of settlement staff, the state of this family may have ended in terminable homelessness or even death.

Yet, when another woman in fear of her abusive husband inquired about the day nursery at Neighborhood House, she became embroiled in an ugly assessment of her character.[70] Quite younger than her husband, she described her time with him as "cruel." Fearing for her own life and that of her child, she had escaped to her parents' home. Neighborhood House referred her request to the DAC who recommended that the child receive one day of nursery care per week. They also forwarded the case to the Children's Aid Society for further investigation into the environmental characteristics affecting the family dynamics.

Children's Aid learned a number of intriguing and, for them, defining features about this woman. First, the couple met when she worked for $3 per week in a candy factory, making her vulnerability suspect from the beginning of their relationship. As explained most notably by historians Joanne Meyerowitz, Kathy Peiss and Carolyn Strange, young women who chose to enter the public world of waged labor opened themselves to an array of suspicions regarding their sexual purity.[71] Social workers naive to the need to earn wages, believed that this woman may have deserved the treatment she received from her husband. Secondly, the husband reported he never intended to marry her, even after she became pregnant with his child, but that her epilepsy made him feel sorry for her. Epileptic individuals always became linked with feeble-mindedness and disease during this period. In the minds of those investigating the case, her epileptic mind could not be trusted to give an accurate assessment of the marriage dynamic. Her story, which included abominable acts by her husband, such as "he had performed several abortions on her," hardly seemed believable after they learned of her epilepsy. Thirdly, as details of the victim's family and upbringing surfaced, her entire life became morally

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[70] Case 395, *Trouble Cases*, 27-29.

[71] Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); and Strange, *Toronto's 'Girl Problem'*.

suspect. She had been born illegitimately, a half-sister reportedly lived in a house of prostitution, two of her sisters had been committed to a home for delinquency, and her mother was "considered low grade." These notably deviant characteristics ultimately defined the treatment she received from Detroit agencies.

After application for a Mother's Pension, numerous personal investigations, and examinations at the Psychopathic Clinic, personnel decided that institutional care was the only remedy for this woman. The case comments read:

> This case illustrates the difficulties of case work with individuals who do not maintain legal standards of family relationship. The problem is further complicated when illegitimate relations are entered into by defectives...The development of the case indicates that the giving of the care of the child to a woman of this nature was questionable procedure. DIAGNOSIS: Epilepsy, illegitimacy, placing undue responsibility upon defective individual.[72]

Staff imparted little educational guidance but rather decided to intervene by separating the mother from child and removing the child from her home. The father became a non-entity once the details of the mother's deviant background were revealed, authorities rendered his abuse justifiable. Whereas she sought professional guidance to help maintain control of her child, this proactive stance ultimately caused this troubled mother to lose the one person that brought her happiness. Indeed, in trying to save her child from the abuses of an unconcerned father, she lost her child to the more powerful regulatory system of the state.

By the 1920s, settlement house workers embraced ideas that characterized some adolescent and young women as "feeble-minded." In Detroit, the Neighborhood House became a site at which physicians diagnosed and labeled young women with the condition of feeble-mindedness. As illustrated in the treatment of eighteen-year-old Anna Wieskowski, these diagnoses directly influenced the ways in which families provided care to younger children.[73] On February 18, 1915, Anna's father died, leaving her mother to

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[72] Ibid., 29.

[73] UCS Cases, folder 7, Case 4634.

care for seven children. Her two older brothers helped support the family by working at the Ford Motor Company while her mother earned $6.50 per week doing day work. For nearly one year (from April 10, 1915 to March 31, 1916), Mrs. Wieskowski received a weekly Mothers' Pension allowance of $3.75. Detroit Public Welfare revoked the pension, however, when officials deemed the combined incomes of the brothers and mother sufficient to support the family. While the record omits it, Mrs. Wieskowski may also have come to depend on the labor of her two eldest daughters — Anna and Marta, eighteen and seventeen years at the time the Mothers' Pension was eliminated — for either the wages they brought home or the care they gave to the youngest children (ten, eight, and one year) when their mother left home to work.

Anna, along with her older siblings, probably attended dances and other parties at Neighborhood House, and probably began exploring with her sexuality. Historians who analyze "the girl problem" found that sexual exploration always caused problems with reformers, parents, and judicial officials.[74] Parents depended on their daughters to either provide child care or to contribute their daily earnings to the family household income. When daughters balked at this lack of freedom, parents often turned to the newly instituted regulation of adolescent sexuality to contain their daughters within their homes. Parents depended on the watchful eye of recreation leaders — such as those living at Neighborhood House — to report troublesome behavior.

Ironically, the solution to these independent acts often took daughters *away* from rather than *returned* them to families. Juvenile Courts sent many adolescent girls to reformatories for "delinquent" and "criminal" young women. In Anna Wieskowski's case, authorities sent her away to the Lapeer Home and Training School. Her internment may have sparked her mother to plead the mayor's office for a Mothers' Pension. Between March 31, 1916 and October 28, 1919, Mrs. Wieskowski appealed to the Juvenile Court

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[74] Alexander, *The "Girl Problem;"* Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*; and Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem.*

for Mothers' Pension funding five times, with her last three appeals going directly to the mayor's office. On November 21, 1919 when the Research Bureau reviewed this case, the Court rendered no decision by the Court. Mrs. Wieskowski had one less daughter to help her with rent, food, and child care; plus, with her eldest son soon marrying, she could no longer count upon his earnings. Mothers depended on elder daughters for successful management of child care, but as Mary Odem argues, the juvenile court was often immune to the practical needs of working-class families, simply wanting to get their "girl problem"(s) under control.[75] Consequently, when mothers turned to the courts for help in gaining control, instead they often lost a valuable family resource.

Daughters were also needed to care for their mothers, but if the community named them delinquent, a family often had to turn to institutional aid. Rebekah Levin, widowed in 1911 with four children, tried for two years to make ends meet but eventually was forced to separate her children into three different care institutions. When Levin's husband died, the company that had employed him gave her a $500 compensation which the United Jewish Council of Detroit (UJCD) put in trust for the children.[76] Levin received a $2 monthly interest payment, hardly enough to run a household in Detroit in the 1910s, although additional funds from Detroit agencies helped her manage the financial burden. The DPW approved an $8 per month relief payment plus shoes and coal, while the UJCD paid her rent of $10 per month in addition to $3 per month for the family. Files indicate that Rebekah "appeared strong enough to work" but "claim[ed] that she was obliged to stay at home to take care of the children." A DPW investigator found the conditions in the home "very unsanitary," and physicians diagnosed Rebekah's youngest daughter, two-and-a-half-year-old Sadie, as "feeble-minded." Soon the authorities shipped off all her children to various institutions, including the Jewish Orphan Asylum in Cleveland (the five and six-year-olds) and the "Deaf and Dumb" School in Michigan (her ten-year-old daughter). In

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[75] Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*, 182-183.
[76] UCS Cases, folder 1, Case 19.

1914, Rebekah moved to the Jewish Widows Home where she lived rent-free with young Sadie and Marion, who had resided in Cleveland.

Troubled best described Rebekah Levin's life. Two years later, Sadie died at the age of six at Eloise Tubercular Hospital. Her son remained in Cleveland at the Jewish Orphan Asylum but she regained custody of her eldest child, Sarah, from the "Deaf and Dumb" School six years later.[77] By 1919, the Levin family managed to make ends meet with the money Rebekah and her daughters earned as domestics.[78]

Even though the family was separated for a time, the ultimate goal remained reunification. This came only when the social workers and religious officials on the scene deemed Rebekah Levin's life financially and emotionally stable. This case demonstrates one of the few times when agency assistance consistently monitored the progress of their client. Without the paternalism of UJCD, the Levins probably would have become like most of the other families cited in this chapter. Yet, the constant monitoring and cooperative plan developed early after the death of Mr. Levin encouraged the family to learn to live independently. Moreover, the agencies involved in the Levin case backed up their plan with financial assistance. In this case, the religion of the client directly influenced the ways in which case workers handled the situation. From the beginning, Jewish authority took precedence in monitoring the family's progress.

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[77] The date of Sarah's return from the "Deaf and Dumb" School is unclear, but in 1915 she was still attending the institution.

[78] Both girls earned about $3 per week, and along with their mother's irregular earnings of $4 per week and a $10 per month DPW relief fund, they could meet their expenses.

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Public officials continued to invest energy into documenting the psychological frailties of Detroit's poor into and throughout the Depression. But beginning in 1920, experts found one way to ease the spread of pathological parenting in the newfound field of early childhood education. The establishment of the Merrill-Palmer School for Motherhood and Homemaking in 1920 created a new avenue for reaching working-class parents. School educators catered to the sensibilities of middle- and upper-class parents, yet they recognized that a large segment of Detroit's children could be better parented thus alleviating some of the social problems plaguing the city. Problems such as delinquency, poor nutrition, illiteracy, and incompetence could improve if early childhood educators reached out to the working people, teaching them how to prepare nutritious meals and practice better hygiene in the home. But even more critical, these educators believed, was their ability to observe these children in a carefully controlled environment designed especially for the development of children. Merrill-Palmer educators hoped to bring the preschool laboratory experience into working-class neighborhoods in order to assess the abilities of these children. In this way, "feeble-minded" parenting could be first contained within the working-class family, then eliminated through expert intervention.

That agenda was first realized in the form of outreach programs into public schools as well as training sessions with Visiting Nurses and Housekeepers. Not until the Depression and the implementation of WPA Nursery Schools would early childhood educators create the observation space they originally envisioned. The next chapter details the evolution of early childhood education in Detroit by looking at the philosophies and educational routines of the women who ran and attended the Merrill-Palmer School. Their initial outreach programs influenced the direction of child care programs in Detroit more than they realized; the city soon adopted their philosophy and implement their methods into public school curriculums for elementary and middle-school girls.

Unfortunately, professional regulation of the poor only increased with the programs devised to control poverty during the Great Depression. No longer termed "feeble-minded," some parental behavior continued to be regulated under the guise of state-sanctioned benefit programs. By defining problems such as child neglect and ill health as pathological, social workers negated the importance of social conditions that denied many parents the opportunity to care for their own children without "expert" interference. Indeed, parental authority within impoverished families remains elusive throughout the twentieth century.

Chapter 6

"INTERPRETING A CHILD TO HIS PARENTS": THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN DETROIT, 1920-1940

"It was a revelation to more than one mother in the group
that she and her child could live out of sight of each other for more than an hour."

Neta McFee, Graduate Student
Merrill-Palmer School for Motherhood and Home Training, 1927[1]

Early childhood educators operating after World War I believed that their entry into the family dynamic improved a child's overall physical and emotional well-being, and preschool laboratories (popularly known as nursery schools) became the tools with which these experts gained entrance. One of the first such laboratories in the United States was established in 1922 at the newly organized Merrill-Palmer School for Motherhood and Home Training in Detroit.[2] That laboratory drew hundreds of aspiring and established professionals to the Merrill-Palmer grounds, helping to make it a premier program in the field of child development. As such, it offered the parents of Detroit a valuable resource in caring for their children. This chapter examines the School's first twenty years of operation, 1920-1940, to understand how professional authority gained currency in academic, business, and personal circles. Analysis of administrative reports and scholarly research published by Merrill-Palmer experts reveals that their focus on parental education

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[1] Neta McFee, "Student's Report," MP, Box 37, folder 3 (Foreign Born; Reports, 1921-35).

[2] Other important nursery schools which opened during this time included the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station at the State University of Iowa in Iowa City (1919); the Yale Psycho-Guidance Clinic Nursery School (1920); and the Ruggles Street Nursery School and Training Center in Boston (1921).

helped guide many of the changes implemented in Detroit and the nation regarding the delivery of child care.

The "special mission" of the School's educators was to train young women for motherhood. They believed that every woman, "whether as mother, teacher, social worker, or merely as relative," confronted problems with children; therefore, these women should be taught how to interact with children in ways that allowed young minds to develop both creative and cognitive thoughts.[3] To that end, it recruited students from the second-generation of college-educated women, many of whom ultimately chose marriage and motherhood over the pursuit of professional careers.[4] The Merrill-Palmer program did not compete with universities for students, rather it cooperated with institutions of higher learning by offering specialized courses that were not available at degree-granting universities.[5]

Those women who attended the Merrill-Palmer School concentrated on teaching parents how to create healthy environments for their children. The focus on parent education rather than data collection set the Merrill-Palmer School apart from other early childhood education programs. Whereas faculty at the renowned Iowa Child Welfare Research Station used their nursery school "to provide baseline data on normal young children to enhance their development,"[6] nursery school activities at the School allowed the Merrill-Palmer community the chance to "interpret a child to his parents."[7]

The School's leaders also included fathers in their parent education plans, believing that men could, and in fact should, take a stronger role in the daily care of children.

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[3] Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training, *Third Annual Report, 1922* (Detroit: Merrill-Palmer School, 1922), 8.

[4] As historian Barbara Beatty explains in her history of early childhood education in America, those women who attended college in the 1920s and 1930s differed from the first generation of degreed women who often remained single because of their professional lives. See Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 150.

[5] Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training, *The Merrill-Palmer School: An Account of Its First Twenty Years, 1920-1940* (Detroit: Merrill-Palmer School, 1940), 37; Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Homemaking, *Sixth Annual Report, 1925* (Detroit: Merrill-Palmer School, 1925), 11; and Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 152.

[6] Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 157.

[7] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of Its First Twenty Years*, 32.

Sociologist Ralph LaRossa has found that during the 1920s and 1930s — the time in which the School was beginning to assert its expert authority — fathers not only expressed interest in their children but participated in the daily care of children at a rate that dispels the stereotype of fathers detached from their children's daily routines.[8] School records show that fathers in Detroit took an active interest in learning how to parent by inviting Merrill-Palmer experts to join their study clubs; invitations that support LaRossa's argument that the "new fatherhood" is much older than the 1960s.

A variety of programs, including community extension work, demonstration research projects, and scientific studies of children attending the nursery school offered Merrill-Palmer professionals access to diverse groups of parents and children. To be sure, their authority extended beyond parents directly using the services of the School. In its first twenty years, Merrill-Palmer professionals observed only 415 children in their nursery school, but that figure rises into the thousands when one includes children exposed to publicly-funded programs like Mothers' Pensions.[9]

Thus, the presence of the Merrill-Palmer School ultimately affected the ways in which the Detroit wage-earner found quality child care. Viewing their project as the "preservation of the family," the Merrill-Palmer "experiment" in early childhood education guided the community to expand the parameters of family, parenting, and child study. While Merrill-Palmer enthusiasts did not set innovative or even radical child care policy, they did serve as advocates for increasing day care resources.[10] Yet, as sociologist Emily D. Cahan contends, class biases played an important role in the establishment of child study and day care programs.[11] Program evaluators argued that one learned the science of child growth and development by studying "normal" children, and to Merrill-Palmer experts, that translated into children with parents who had the freedom to learn about their

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[8] LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 39-40.

[9] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of Its First Twenty Years*, 27.

[10] On pages 226 and 227, Lawrence K. Frank details some of the Merrill-Palmer involvement in World War II and post-War child care developments in, "Beginnings of Child Development," *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (October 1962): 207-228.

[11] Cahan, *Past Caring*, 2.

children throughout the day. Consequently, mothers who spent their days working for wages fell outside the parameters of normal parenting. This limited, albeit contemporary, understanding of "normal" failed to recognize the realities of working-class families and contained appropriate parenting within a narrow raced, classed, and heterosexual structure.

When the School opened in 1920, Detroit was the fourth largest city in the country and an important destination of thousands of migrants and immigrants. Settlement houses and religious organizations served the child care needs for some of Detroit's working-class families, and many middle-class women had organized themselves into mothers' clubs. Yet teaching mothers how to best care for their children became the project of professionals from both the private and public sectors. Merrill-Palmer educators presented their ideas about child development to parents whose children attended their nursery school; to university students who enrolled in their residential training program; to young adolescent girls detained in Detroit's correctional facilities; to families who used local settlement houses for recreation and health care; and to mothers who depended on a Mothers' Pension for survival. School experts treated each group differently but they communicated the same information about a child's development: that proper nutrition and the freedom to creatively explore the world around them were vital elements in a child's growth; and the intense monitoring of those elements was necessary for a healthy child.

The processes used in teaching each of the above groups is addressed in detail in the following pages of this chapter, but first I turn to the philosophy which drove the founding of this institution. The widow of Ohio Senator Thomas W. Palmer, Lizzie Merrill Palmer, provided the funds necessary to build the Merrill-Palmer School. Although Palmer had no children of her own, she dreamed of training young women in the work of mothering and homemaking. Upon her death on July 28, 1916, she left property valued at $3,000,000 for the establishment of a school dedicated to her dream.[12] Lizzie

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[12] Merrill-Palmer School, *Third Annual Report*, 5; and Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 152.

Merrill Palmer's ideas regarding motherhood as well as her philanthropy helped to establish the Merrill-Palmer School but the educators and students attracted to the program made the School an educational force in the field of early childhood education.

The Merrill-Palmer Philosophy

Lizzie Merrill Palmer believed that strong families depended on women dedicating their energy to ensuring safe, loving, and secure environments for their families. The language of her will attests to her convictions regarding the relationship between women's roles and strong families:

> I hold profoundly the conviction that the welfare of any community is divinely, and hence inseparably, dependent upon the quality of its motherhood, and the spirit and character of its homes . . .[13]

She believed that women's careful "service" as wives and mothers could improve society and her wealth allowed Palmer to promote this popular sentiment. By devoting her fortune to the project of training young women in the "management, supervision, direction, and inspiration of homes," Palmer ensured that her ideals positioning women in the private sphere would become institutionalized.[14]

School trustees embraced early childhood education as the instrument to promote Palmer's convictions. They entrusted the project to a group of female educators trained in Home Economics, committed to community service, and dedicated to advanced education for women. Trustees hired Edna Noble White to lead the School, and White promptly began work on establishing a curriculum that would integrate science with sociology, and classroom learning with community involvement. White believed (and she set about surrounding herself with faculty who shared her ideas) that children must be considered in whole terms: that a child's progress had to be understood in relation to her parents, siblings,

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[13] Merrill-Palmer School, *Third Annual Report*, 1.
[14] Ibid.

and other family members.[15] Educating college students, parents, and children at the Merrill-Palmer School became the force that drove those ideas.

Using her academic and government connections, White campaigned to establish the Merrill-Palmer School as the premier child development center in the United States, hoping its preschool laboratory would become the American model for nursery school education.[16] Determined to incorporate the latest innovations into the School's curriculum, White traveled to London in 1921 where she connected with experts who had been successfully using the nursery school method since 1913.[17] Convinced by the British expertise, White hired an English woman, Emma Henton, as head teacher for the Merrill-Palmer Nursery School.[18]

Only carefully selected students entered the Merrill-Palmer program, and most of them lived on campus in a closely-monitored environment.[19] Six women in their senior year of study at Michigan Agricultural College (present-day Michigan State University) attended the first classes on January 9, 1922. Six more students from M.A.C. arrived in Detroit for the second quarter (April 3 to June 16, 1922). In the third quarter of operation, September 18 to December 22, 1922, the School admitted another six students from M.A.C., as well as the first students from outside the State and the first graduate student.[20] Enrollment would mushroom after that initial year to an average undergraduate class of fifty women and twenty-five graduate students.[21]

Between the years 1924 and 1940, the School also welcomed seventy-seven international female professionals who represented nineteen countries.[22] These women

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[15] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of Its First Twenty Years*, 32.

[16] Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 152. White graduated from the University of Illinois in 1906. She taught home economics at Ohio State University for seven years and during World War I was the Ohio director of food conservation for the Council of Defense Work.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Merrill-Palmer School, *Third Annual Report*, 14.

[19] Merrill-Palmer staff initiated mental tests for all students in April 1926. Details of test results are outlined in Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training, *Biennial Report for 1926 and 1927* (Detroit: Merrill-Palmer School, October 1928), 36-37.

[20] Merrill-Palmer School, *Third Annual Report*, 8-9.

[21] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of Its First Twenty Years*, 37.

[22] Ibid., 23. Two-thirds of the international students called Canada, China, and England their

arrived in Detroit already certified as public health nurses, teachers in elementary or technical schools, heads of youth movements, social workers, or supervisors of government extension and rehabilitation programs. Sponsored by their governments, their stay in the United States was both temporary and ambassador-like, having come specifically to study early childhood education. Most Merrill-Palmer students, however, were Americans with backgrounds in Home Economics from a Midwestern or Northeastern university.

School administrators did not restrict admission to single or American women but the reality of campus life in the 1920s and 1930s limited the kind of coed[23] that found a Merrill-Palmer education appealing. Authorities admitted, trained and graduated only one African American woman during the years 1920-1940, a statistic which underscores educational segregation in Detroit.[24] In her history of black female professionals operating in the Jim Crow Era, Stephanie J. Shaw shows how this period "marked a turning point in the paid public careers of black professional women."[25] Shaw argues that racial unrest occurred in American cities during 1919 forced white administrators to use African American professionals for "community race work" and "race-relations work." In many cases those professionals were female, allowing black professional women to earn wages for work they had previously performed as a free service to their communities. The career pattern of the African American woman admitted to Merrill-Palmer, Ethel Childs Baker,

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homes. Other countries sending women for training included Australia, Estonia, Germany, Hawaii (of course, not yet part of the United States in 1940), Ireland, India, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, Poland, Scotland, Switzerland, Union of South Africa, Turkey, and Wales.

[23] While the Merrill-Palmer School was a single-sex institution during the years of this study (1920-1940), I use the word "coed" to describe many of these women because they originated from coeducational universities such as Michigan Agriculture College. Some students came from all-female institutions like Smith College, but they were in the minority.

[24] John Reid, " 'A Career to Build, a People to Serve, a Purpose to Accomplish': Race, Class, Gender and Detroit's First Black Women Teachers, 1865-1916," *The Michigan Historical Review* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 1-28.

[25] Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 189.

fits this framework because white administrators noticed her professional expertise through her volunteer service with children at a Detroit day nursery.[26]

Women who initially attended the School often held a keen awareness of their advantaged positions in society.[27] Coeds may have shared a middle-class status, but native-born European American women and African American women experienced middle-class in radically different ways.[28] Race allowed most Merrill-Palmer students to assume their right to these privileges, while it forced others to recognize that a Merrill-Palmer education provided them a unique opportunity to interact with white professionals. Middle-class status — whether experienced by black or white students — defined their roles as professionals and as women. Race, however, created stark differences in the way students *could* experience their Merrill-Palmer education.[29]

Consider the difference in the ways Ethel Childs Baker and Florence Willson Duhn entered the Merrill-Palmer School. Childs Baker was born, raised and educated in Detroit. She left the North to attend Alabama State University in Montgomery, graduating in 1935, then teaching first grade in Talledega County, Alabama for two years. The Depression left few opportunities for an educated African American woman, so when Childs Baker

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[26] Ethel Childs Baker interview, 25 March 1988, Early Childhood Oral History Project [hereafter ECOHP], Reuther Library.

[27] This attitude appears in the oral histories, referred to as ECOHP, and collected by the Council on Early Childhood in the Center for Urban Studies at Wayne State University. That project has helped in documenting the history of day care and early childhood education in the Midwest by interviewing sixteen professionals identified as pioneers in their field. For this research, I focused on the lives of seven women interviewed as part of the Council's oral history project. These women either attended the Merrill-Palmer School or interacted with its faculty in a professional capacity during its first twenty years. Interview selections have also been published in Langlois, *Serving Children Then and Now.*

[28] Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham has articulated the ways in which race influences the experience of such social constructions as class, sexuality, and gender in her pivotal essay, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 251-274. She uses this theoretical advance in *Righteous Discontent*, and class is specifically analyzed on pages 204-211. Historian Darlene Clark Hine addresses the conflicts faced by African American women who migrated to the Midwest in her essay, "Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915-1945," in *Hine Sight*, 87-108.

[29] I first explored the influences of a Merrill-Palmer education to students attending it in the first twenty years in, "Training Young Women in the "Service" of Motherhood: Early Childhood Education at Detroit's Merrill-Palmer School, 1920-1940," presented at the Tenth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women and published in *The Michigan Historical Review* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 103-132.

returned to Detroit in 1937 she turned to authorities at the Department of Public Education for guidance in finding employment. They recommended she work at Franklin Street Settlement, a "job" which turned out to be volunteer service in the day nursery. Desperate for any opportunity, in January 1938, she began volunteering at Franklin Street's day nursery. The director immediately recognized her talents and suggested she study at the Merrill-Palmer School. Because of her race, Childs Baker never gave the idea serious consideration. Undaunted, the settlement director invited Merrill-Palmer instructor Ellen Miller into the nursery to observe Childs Baker's skill with the children. Within six months of Miller's visit the School offered Childs Baker a scholarship to join its graduate student body as its first African American student.[30]

Florence Willson Duhn — native-born, white, and Protestant — represents the typical Merrill-Palmer student. Born in Randall, Iowa in 1906, her country doctor father discouraged her from entering nursing because he believed the work was too hard, but encouraged her to attend college and train for the teaching profession. Entering the field of education suited her father's ideas about women and work as well as Willson Duhn's desire to attend college, and in 1924 she began classes at Iowa State College in Ames. Willson Duhn's mother taught school before she married and used these skills to enrich her children's developmental growth. It was her mother's dedication to providing an educationally-rounded home life that led Willson Duhn to explore early childhood education as a career for herself. She entered Merrill-Palmer in 1927 as a senior, and would stay to complete graduate work in child development. One of her favorite courses introduced her to community service and took her into the working-class neighborhoods of Detroit to perform on-site child guidance at settlement houses.

Willson Duhn sought out Merrill-Palmer, and her race and ethnicity allowed her to pass the typical entry requirements without generating any controversy or faculty

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[30] "Student Affairs Committee Meeting June 6, 1938" and "Student Affairs Committee Meeting September 13, 1938," in MP, Box 130, folder 1 (Student Affairs Committee; Reports 1931-40).

discussion. On the other hand, the faculty approached Childs Baker by offering her a scholarship, but not before the director instigated numerous discussions about the tension her presence would cause. Whereas Florence Willson Duhn relished her time spent in Detroit settlement houses as an unique opportunity to *observe* poverty, Ethel Childs Baker understood that the time she spent volunteering at Franklin Street Settlement had been her ticket into Merrill-Palmer.[31] Willson Duhn believed that choosing Merrill-Palmer had expanded her horizons; indeed, for a young woman from small-town Iowa, city-based Merrill-Palmer "was a wonderful melting pot of students."[32] But Childs Baker understood that her admission represented a contribution to that diversity: she knew the tension that her admission caused and believed her experience with southern life had influenced School officials to consider her application. She noted:

> The reason they had asked me to come in as a student [was that] I had been a student in a black college in the south and they thought I understood segregation, which I did. However, what they forgot was that I had had all my schooling from first grade to high school in Detroit and there was a difference.[33]

Childs Baker's memory of her entry into Merrill-Palmer is noteworthy: she remembers acting director Mary Sweeney arranging it during an absence by White.[34] According to Childs Baker, the timing was fortuitous in that White was "very, very surprised and not overjoyed" to find her enrolled in the program.[35] However, Student Affairs Committee minutes record an open discussion among the faculty, including White, concerning Child's admission. In fact, the director was quite concerned about "possible complications" from the presence of a "colored" student on campus, and urged Sweeney to

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[31] Florence Willson Duhn interview, 25 November 1986, ECOHP; and Childs Baker, ECOHP.

[32] Langlois, *Serving Children Then and Now*, 26.

[33] Childs Baker, ECOHP, 3.

[34] Sweeney joined Merrill-Palmer in 1925 to chair its Physical Growth and Development department. She replaced Thompson Woolley as assistant director in the academic year 1928-29. Sweeney held an M.S. and an M.A. from the University of Kentucky and Columbia University respectively. Prior to her arrival at Merrill-Palmer, she had been the chair of Home Economics at the University of Kentucky and the dean of Home Economics at Michigan Agricultural College. See Merrill-Palmer School, *Sixth Annual Report*, 15.

[35] Childs Baker, ECOHP, 3.

prepare Childs for a likely unpleasant atmosphere. The faculty agreed that her tuition would be waived and they gave Sweeney full power to act accordingly.[36]

Perhaps White's angst reflected the prevalence of racial segregation and discrimination in Detroit. The Merrill-Palmer School, equipped to serve the daughters of midwestern and northeastern white families, had sheltered itself from the reality of black professional women.[37] But in September 1938 Sweeney notified the Student Affairs Committee that after many "frank" conversations with Childs regarding the "possible need for discretion in some situations," she had offered her a graduate student position at the School.[38]

As a black woman, Childs Baker could not use the student lavatory or coat closet. An unspoken understanding of segregation forced her to walk across the street to the public library for facilities, hang her coat in the basement, and eat her lunch in the cafeteria alone. When faced with the prejudicial "policies" and racial ostracism of some staff and students, she turned to Ellen M. Miller, who had supported her admission from the beginning. Minutes of meetings and reports suggest that Miller was a confidante of sorts for many Merrill-Palmer students. Associated with the School since its inception, Miller's expertise lay in extension work.[39] Surprised to hear of Child's dilemma, Miller informed the student of her right to use facilities on Merrill-Palmer property and urged her to begin sharing these services with the other students.[40] When interviewed in 1988, Childs Baker demonstrated little animosity toward her fellow students and reported that after her talk with Miller she

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[36] MP, Box 130, folder 1 (Student Affairs Committee; Report 1931-40).

[37] For information on black professional women in Detroit during this period see Darden et al., *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development*, esp. Ch. 3, "Patterns of Race and Class Disparity," 67-108; Hine, "Black Migration to the Urban Midwest," and "Black Women in the Middle West" in *Hine Sight*; Thomas, *Life For Us Is What We Make It*; and Reid, " 'A Career to Build, a People to Serve, a Purpose to Accomplish.' "

[38] Childs Baker, ECOHP.

[39] Miller taught the first demonstration courses to immigrant women that had been contracted by the Detroit International Institute and continued to direct outreach programs.

[40] Ibid.; and MP, Box 130, folder 1 (Student Affairs Committee; Reports 1931-40). Complete documentation for the years 1938, 1939, and 1940 is missing from the archives, preventing further checking of the manner in which the School dealt with racial prejudice. Categories of files missing for these years include Student Rosters, Student Affairs Committee Meetings, and Faculty Meetings.

began eating lunch with a white woman who also volunteered at Franklin Street and became her good friend.[41] Although she endured prejudice and discrimination, Childs did connect with some students and remembered fondly her friendship with another white woman:

> One of the young girls from Atlanta said to me when I sat down at the table in the library, "You know, I've never sat with a Nigra before, not even my nanny!" I said, "Well my name is Ethel Childs and I hope that we can be friends."[42]

The entry of Ethel Childs into their community forced School personnel to re-evaluate its student population. Although they came to no decisions by 1940, and in fact retained racist ideas about the quality of nonwhite students' performances, they began to talk about integration. The January 1939 Student Affairs Committee meeting, for instance, focused on race from two distinct angles: the discovery of a quality nursery school program at an all-black college and discussion of admission policies regarding "colored students."[43] A visit by Merrill-Palmer nutritionist Leila McGuire to Bennett College at Greensboro, North Carolina over the 1938-39 winter break sparked the discussion, as she described the facility as "a very well planned, beautifully equipped, modern nursery school."[44] Bennett College president David D. Jones had requested Merrill-Palmer's assistance with child-development instruction, and the faculty discussed recommending Childs for that role. Obviously they saw Childs' race as a key factor in their recommendation, yet considering the high standards to which they held their students, one must assume that they also believed in her work as a child-development expert. The

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[41] Fellow student (Louise L.) Sally Brown interviewed Childs Baker in 1988 as part of ECOHP and confessed that she had only learned of the ostracism at the end of their school year. Yet, according to Childs Baker, several students were aware that she ate alone but chose to do nothing.

[42] Ibid. I am reminded of bell hooks' provocative assessment of white womens' attitudes toward women of color, and the regional differences that may influence the ways in which northern and southern white women view their interactions with women of color. In *Feminist Theory: from margin to center*, hooks writes, "I had not known white women were ignorant of the impact of race and class on their social status and consciousness. (Southern white women often have a more realistic perspective on racism and classism than white women in other areas of the United States)." hooks, *Feminist Theory* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), 10.

[43] "Student Affairs Committee Meeting, January 11, 1939," in MP, Box 130, folder 1 (Student Affairs Committee; Reports 1931-40).

[44] Ibid.

committee members decided against sending a student and assigned an established faculty member to the project. Their discussions reveal, however, a sense that by the end of the 1930s, Merrill-Palmer administrators and faculty felt the need to pay closer attention to how race affected the ways in which they understood their place(s) within the profession.

But their support of Childs ran counter to their other decision regarding desegregation. The Committee members concluded that "caution must be exercised" when considering admitting African American women to Merrill-Palmer.[45] Their concerns centered on beliefs that nonwhite students would not have the proper foundational training or be able to maintain a rigorous academic pace. By the end of Merrill-Palmer's first twenty years, the presence of qualified African American students, professionals, and institutions had confused and challenged but not fully reversed the faculty's assumptions about race and ability.

In spite of these conflicts, Childs graduated in May 1939 and received an offer to teach in New Orleans. Having overcome racial injustices at Merrill-Palmer, she now faced constraining attitudes regarding marital status and professional opportunities for women. Her marriage in September 1939 eliminated any possibility of Childs pursuing a teaching career. In fact, her husband forbade her even to interview for a position at a nursery school in Detroit. As historian Jacqueline Jones explains, during Reconstruction and into the twentieth century, it became a priority of African-American men to keep their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters out of the wage labor force — and especially away from work that would bring them into white homes.[46] Instead, Childs Baker stayed active in early childhood education through volunteerism and returned to paid employment only after her children were grown and out of college.[47]

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 361, n. 79.

[47] She started a PTA group which consisted mostly of Polish immigrants, and noted that, "even though some of them [the parents] were not too well-versed in the English language, they did come and help, and they showed their interest by coming." Childs Baker attributed her understanding of the problems children in the 1960s and 1970s experienced (such as the unavailability of before- and after-school care) to her initial work in the Franklin Street Settlement Day Nursery. She also wanted her children to experience preschool, and in 1941 she enrolled her son in the Peter Pan Nursery which

Attitudes toward race, class, gender, and ethnicity influenced the choices available to budding professionals in the pre-World War II arena. The Merrill-Palmer community did not challenge these ideas but instead accepted the boundaries each category presented. They focused on guiding parental education rather than in forging new professional paths for women. In fact, in arguing that mothers offered the most effective care for the development of young minds, Merrill-Palmer experts contributed to prescriptives that contained women and girls in the home. They devoted great attention to parents living in middle - and upper-class neighborhoods; however, in their attempts to secure females as child care providers, Merrill-Palmer educators began to extend their expertise to the working class, paying particular attention to adolescent girls deemed vulnerable to learning poor parenting skills.

School officials believed they had not, "fully met its public obligation until demonstration of methods for reaching that large portion of young women who do not attend universities, yet do become mothers, are made."[48] To that end, they embarked on a series of programs with public and private enterprises in the city of Detroit, Wayne County, and Michigan. They became particularly concerned with girls labeled as juvenile delinquents who seemed likely to become mothers at an early age. With little chance of attending college (not to mention high school), these girls exemplified a population of mothers at high risk of raising malnourished, ill-educated, and even delinquent children. The training of these girls, according to the faculty, fit Lizzie Merrill Palmer's mission of "disciplin[ing]" young women and girls over the age of ten years to "mentally, morally, physically, and religiously" inspire their families.[49] Authorities throughout the Midwest soon recognized Merrill-Palmer's work with girls who had been sent to detention homes or were studying at continuation schools, and they began contracting with the School to

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had opened in 1936 as the first private nursery school in Detroit for African American families. See Childs Baker, ECOHP, 24, 26; and Langlois, *Serving Children Then and Now*, 17-18.

[48] Merrill-Palmer School, *Sixth Annual Report*, 52.

[49] Merrill-Palmer School, *Third Annual Report*, frontispiece.

provide homemaking education at their institutions. In this way, the School exercised its influence beyond parents and mature students.

The Program of Study at Merrill-Palmer

The acceptance of early childhood education as a respectable career for young unmarried women gave students a broader range of choices once they arrived at college. For women in the Midwest, the Merrill-Palmer School gave them the chance to engage in a specialized line of study without traveling too far from their home communities. These women engaged in a dynamic interdisciplinary curriculum for child development and family life education that included study on and off the campus. Course work, which included guest presentations from a wide array of experts, reflected the scientific emphasis popular in the child study movement.[50] A student in 1922 could expect to take courses in four general areas: Psychology, Child Health and Nutrition, Sociological Aspects of Child Problems, and Home Administration and Practice House.[51] Instructors combined lecture, laboratory observation, and field trip experiences into their classes. Course offerings also included a graduate course in psychology, "Individual Research in the Psychology of Young Children," taught by child psychologist, Helen Thompson Woolley.

Woolley helped define the field in the early 1920s. A psychologist who had studied philosophy and psychology at the University of Chicago under John Dewey and James R. Angell, Woolley focused on the study of children's personalities to understand their mental and emotional developments.[52] In conjunction with Elizabeth Cleveland, the

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[50] Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 152; and *Merrill-Palmer Biennial Report for 1926 and 1927*, 31-32.

[51] Merrill-Palmer School, *Third Annual Report*, 10-13.

[52] When Helen Thompson Woolley joined Merrill-Palmer in 1921, her career seemed rather promising. Prior to her work at Merrill-Palmer, she had directed the psychological unit of the Cincinnati Public Schools. From 1923 to 1925, she served as vice president of the American Association of University Women, where she incorporated parental and preparental education into their agendas. In 1925, she became the head of the Institute of Child Welfare at Teachers College at Columbia. Her publishing record reflected a feverish pace (twenty-six research-oriented articles between 1922 and 1925). But soon after joining the Columbia program, she and her husband separated and one year later deteriorating health forced her to resign her position at Teacher's College. See Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 151-156; and Merrill-Palmer, *An Account of Its First*

first graduate student to train at the School, Woolley developed a standardized method of testing preschool children. In order to pinpoint the non-verbal ability of children, that method incorporated Montessori apparatus into four performance tests. Previously, the School used the Stanford Revision of the Binet test to judge mental ability, but this proved incomplete in that it did not adequately assess a preschooler's strengths, namely their non-verbal skills. Out of the research by Woolley, Cleveland, and doctoral student Rachel Stutsman, in 1924 the Merrill-Palmer Standards of Physical and Mental Growth and the Merrill-Palmer Scale of Mental Tests took the place of the Binet for testing young children.[53] These tests were implemented at the Merrill-Palmer Nursery School.

Merrill-Palmer educators believed that observing children in a closely-monitored environment provided the key to understanding how these families operated, thus the preschool laboratory became a critical tool in their project. Students and faculty commonly referred to parents involved in the Nursery School as a "very strongly, devoted parents group."[54] Faculty member Winifred Rand expressed this kind of awe in a March 1926 article to *Child Study* where she pointed out the stark differences between various visitors to their nursery school. To Rand, the perfect observer was that parent who had learned to steal quietly into the observation room and maintain an "unobtrusive" position while learning from their child's activities. Faculty hated visitors who made themselves known to the children; who instead of sitting quietly in the chairs circling the edges of the room, chose center stage and performed for the children. These visitors interrupted and, in fact, invaded observation. Rand explained the nursery school environment as a place where children were: "freed for self-expression and yet learning self-control; freed for self-development, yet learning self-responsibility; respected as individuals and yet learning to

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Twenty Years, 47.

[53] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of Its First Twenty Years*, 47-49; and Merrill-Palmer School, *Biennial Report for 1926 and 1927*, 51-52.

[54] Marjorie Sanger interview, 22 October 1986, ECOHP, 44. Sanger completed a Masters degree in 1940 from Boston University, and worked in some of the most prestigious nursery programs in the country, including the Ruggles Street Nursery School in Boston. During the 1940s, she taught in the preschool laboratory at the Child Welfare Research Station at the University of Iowa before joining Merrill-Palmer in 1948.

respect the rights of others."[55] Parents who truly understood the work of the School and its nursery school honored the rules laid down for them by faculty, for they knew that their children would only benefit from their compliance.

Interestingly, Merrill-Palmer experts did not classify these parents as homogeneous, but saw them as diverse families who represented the "wide variety of elements found in what is called the 'great middle class'."[56] Although alumnae had fond memories of their interactions with working-class parents, they often found their contact with these mothers and fathers unpredictable and frustrating. By contrast, Merrill-Palmer women considered exchanges with middle-class parents intellectually stimulating.

These class-based notions of parenthood directed the ways in which the Merrill-Palmer community utilized the nursery school as an educational tool: in the minds of these educators, standardizing parenthood and childhood was crucial to forming healthy families. When in 1924 Woolley and Cleveland created the Merrill-Palmer Scale of Mental Tests, they argued that parents needed child development experts to help them monitor the regularity of their child's diet, habits, and growth; nursery schools would track these changes for middle-class families.

Woolley also believed that nursery schools gave children a much-needed respite from domineering or nervous mothers. In an address delivered at the Parenthood Conference for the Child Study Association on October 26, 1925, Woolley admitted that, "so many of us mothers love the baby stage and find it an almost insurmountable temptation to prolong it as long as possible."[57] Woolley argued that even children with college-educated, economically-stable mothers benefited from a nursery school experience in that their physical, mental, and emotional states improved and developed with the interaction. She emphasized the need for children to interact not only with their parents and

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[55] Winifred Rand, "Parenthood and the Nursery School," *Child Study* 5 (March 1926): 11.

[56] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of Its First Twenty Years*, 32.

[57] Quote found on page 5 of Helen T. Woolley, "The Real Function of the Nursery School," *Child Study* 3 (February 1926): 5-6, and 10-11.

siblings but with children of their own age, stating that this contact gave them an "essential stimulus to mental and social development [that] cannot be furnished by contact with very different ages."[58]

Barbara Beatty has found that most parent-education programs based at university nursery schools geared their efforts toward middle- and upper-class parents, especially college-educated mothers.[59] Merrill-Palmer fits this pattern by devoting a variety of resources to the middle-class woman. In establishing its Advisory Service for College Women, the School devised a method both to guide college-educated women with career plans and to create a pool of qualified clients for its nursery school. During the years 1933-35, the Advisory Service gave thirty-nine pregnant women information on prenatal/infant care and the value of a nursery school education.[60] School officials also promoted fatherly involvement in raising children by encouraging his attendance at the mother's prenatal and infant-health screening appointments.[61] Strategies for incorporating fathers into parental education included scheduling lectures and group discussions in the evenings.[62]

Merrill-Palmer faculty offered a variety of presentations for these middle-class families: in 1932, morning programs included "Religious Education during the Pre-School Years" (six registrants) and "Home Problems" (twenty-five registrants); "Posture" (twelve registrants) and "After-School Occupation -- A Practical Course in Handicraft" (thirteen registrants) were taught in the afternoon; and parents attended "The Family and its

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[58] Ibid., 11.

[59] Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 136-168.

[60] Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training, *Eleventh Report, September 1933 to June 1935* (Detroit: The Merrill-Palmer School, May 1936), 38-39.

[61] The participation of early-twentieth-century, middle-class fathers in raising their children has recently been reevaluated by sociologists Ralph LaRossa and Donald C. Reitzes who have analyzed advice-seeking letters written to Angelo Patri, a popular child guidance "expert," between 1925 and 1939. They argue (most tentatively) that the presence of letters written by fathers counters the common understanding of absent and/or noninvolved fathers, and suggests that middle-class fathers involved themselves as fully as late-twentieth-century fathers in their children's care. See LaRossa and Reitzes, "Gendered Perceptions of Father Involvement in Early 20th Century America," 223-229.

[62] Merrill-Palmer School, *Biennial Report*, 46; *Eighth Annual Report*, 19; and *Tenth Annual Report*, 46.

Relationships" (thirty-four registrants) and "Emotional Growth and the Child" (ten registrants) in the evenings.[63]

However, nursery schooling for children of prosperous parents remained the centerpiece of a Merrill-Palmer education. Nursery admission criteria stipulated that, "any child who can walk and who is moderately well trained for the toilet is eligible provided he is approximately normal mentally and physically."[64] School administration also took great pains to suggest the diversity of their clients, noting that they worked toward a children's group which fully represented Detroit. They believed that they had achieved this goal, stating in the 1922 Annual Report:

> Our unselected group is so varied that it seems to accomplish this end [full representation of Detroit]. Some of the children come from families of generations of education and culture and others from families whose educational background is very limited; some of the children come from homes of wealth and others from homes of very small means; some of them belong in families whose home life is perfectly normal, and others in families in which one parent is dead, or the parents are divorced or separated. The children themselves present a wide variety of abilities and of character qualities.[65]

No matter their perceptions, the fact remains that Merrill-Palmer experts observed only white children in the Nursery School between the years 1920 and 1940. It opened on January 9, 1922 with an enrollment of thirty children; an additional thirty children enrolled during that first year of operation. Of the sixty children attending the nursery school, twenty-five children left before the end of that first year. A variety of reasons accounted for the attrition: eight families left the city; six children reached the required age limit; one family had an illness in the family; and another left for unknown reasons. The School asked the parents of two children to withdraw; and seven parents voluntarily withdrew their children because they either feared infection (two cases) or resented the criticism offered by

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[63] Merrill-Palmer School, *Tenth Annual Report*, 46.
[64] Merrill-Palmer School, *Third Annual Report, 1922*, 16.
[65] Ibid., 16-17.

Nursery School teachers (five cases).[66] Despite these losses, the School maintained a full enrollment throughout its operation, drawing from the 101 applications in their file.

Children arrived at the Nursery School at 9:00 a.m. to begin a full day of activity. After passing a physical, they proceeded to one of two nursery school rooms to "work" individually for one hour on a task of the child's choosing. They then gathered in a circle for fifteen minutes to either hear a story, sing, or share with the other children their "news of the day."[67] Outdoor play followed their mid-morning snack, and again children were left to choose their own activity whether that meant playing alone with a toy or in group games. After their outdoor time, the children enjoyed a music lesson which faculty called "exceedingly popular." Some children then rested briefly while others set the luncheon table and served lunch to the group. After lunch, the children enjoyed a much-needed two-hour nap. Their day ended with a small snack upon waking and outdoor play until their parents called for them. As the above regimen demonstrates, Merrill-Palmer experts asked much of the children but they believed that children excelled when given the freedom of choice and were asked to do for themselves.[68] Most parents who used the Nursery School agreed with the experts, but as the withdrawal statistics show, some parents believed these methods too harsh and demanding for their children.

In order to benefit from the nursery school experience, parents needed to devote daily time to the project, and few working-class families had the kind of control over their schedules required by the School. In addition to the litany of nightly, weekly, and monthly health reports, parents spent many hours simply bringing a child to and from the School. Children could only enter the nursery school after they passed a daily physical exam, so parents had to stay at the School until nurses completed this examination. If they found a child sick, then parents were asked to immediately return home with the child and document any changes, physical and emotional, that might occur throughout the day. In

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[66] Ibid., 17.
[67] Ibid., 19.
[68] Ibid., 20.

this way, the School hoped to engage the parent in a cooperative educational experience that offered the parent as much developmental growth as the child.[69]

Students and faculty accepted the policy of using race, class, and ethnicity to determine which children would attend their nursery school, which mothers would benefit from child study, and which fathers would invest energy into parenting. Because only European American children attended Merrill-Palmer's nursery school, child-development educators continued Progressive-Era practices of serving children along racial lines. Because wage-earning parents could not afford the preschool laboratory experience, Merrill-Palmer enthusiasts allowed class to define the parameters for appropriate mother/father roles. And, since early childhood experts used ethnicity as a marker for intelligence, they could justify reserving observation programs for the "best" families.

Nevertheless, during its first twenty years the Merrill-Palmer community began to alter its ideologies regarding the race, class, and ethnicity of its family clients and student educators by bringing educational programs into working class communities, addressing the needs of these families in School courses. By 1930, a typical schedule at Merrill-Palmer included the courses "Nursery School Procedures," "The Preparation of Children's Food," "Environmental Factors of Child Life," and "Mental Growth and the Development of Character in Young Childhood," all of which now included components directed at the working-class family.[70]

In addition to scientific and sociological training, the organizing guidelines for the School specified that religious training be infused into a Merrill-Palmer education to emphasize the power religion played in many families. To that end, the administration secured the consultation services of Dr. George A. Coe, former professor of Religious Education at Columbia University. Speakers committed to missionary work connected students to the world at large. The Sunday afternoon tea served as a traditional forum for

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[69] Edna Noble White, "The Nursery School: A Teacher of Parents," *Child Study* 4 (October 1926): 8-9.

[70] Merrill-Palmer School for Motherhood and Home Training, *Ninth Report, September 1929 to June 1931* (Detroit: Merrill-Palmer School, December 1931), 13-14.

these women to mix with an interdenominational group of religious leaders.[71] They learned that as with many American cities, religious communities in Detroit accepted responsibility for organizing relief efforts for its members, and that many of these recipients would also benefit from instruction in proper nutrition, health, and safety for children. Hence, from its beginning, a Merrill-Palmer education worked to demonstrate that American families were both many-faceted and diverse organisms.

The School also recognized that some students wanted more in-depth training in parent education, and in that same year, they added a line of study that specifically addressed the ways in which early childhood educators could interact with parents. The general major, "Family Life," was offered for the first time in the 1936-37 school year which required students to integrate four fields of study named as, "physical growth, mental hygiene of the family, economic and managerial aspects of the family, and family relationships."[72]

Edna Noble White addressed in her twenty year report, why a "widening and perhaps deepening of the work" in parent education occurred since the School opened. Recognizing the national support of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial and the National Council of Parent Education, she went further in her analysis than attributing the growing interest simply to economics. Rather, she believed that the reams of research gathered in child development proved that parents were absolutely integral to a child's growth. She understood mental hygiene ideas that equated mistakes made by parents to "inadequacies and emotional conflicts" of that parent, but she hoped that the profession had progressed in its understanding of parents. She wrote:

> Parents are people. They show every variation in behavior that educators, doctors, bankers, lawyers, and bricklayers show. If they are inadequate as

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[71] I thank Maria Quinlan-Leiby, an alumna of Smith College, who helped me understand the student/faculty tea; that it remains an important and very special memory of her college experience which allowed her and her classmates to mingle with their professors in an informal (and nurturing) environment. Memoirs of Merrill-Palmer students communicate similar sentiments. For details on religious instruction at the School, see Merrill-Palmer School, *Biennial Report for 1926 and 1927*, 33.

[72] Merrill-Palmer School for Motherhood and Home Training, *Twelfth Annual Report for 1935-36 and 1936-37* (Detroit, Merrill-Palmer School, March 1938), 18-19.

> people they will be inadequate as parents. If they have emotional conflicts and are badly adjusted, they will adjust badly to their children, and the children, plastic, sensitive, growing organisms, will have a serious handicap to meet very early in life.
>
> But mankind on the whole seems to profit by education . . . "Know thyself" is a step toward "cure thyself," and insofar as parent education helps the individual to an understanding of himself, it may help to effect a cure. But parent education is not primarily for the parent who needs therapy. Such a parent must seek help elsewhere. Rather, it is for the one who needs to know.[73]

By 1940, Noble White emphasized that mothers *and* fathers benefited from Merrill-Palmer's parent education programs. Moreover, she clearly hoped to separate her profession from social work and public health nursing as well as to disengage their work from psychological therapy. That is not to say that Merrill-Palmer experts wanted to reject psychology. On the contrary, early childhood educators paid homage to the intellectually-charged field of psychology for its contributions to their profession. Merrill-Palmer experts believed the two fields complimented one another, however, they were not in the business of dealing with pathology, neurosis, and other psychological diagnoses. As Julia Grant explained in her history of child study clubs and parent education, intellectuals — like those researchers and educators at the Merrill-Palmer School — saw psychology as the tool to securing stability within the family. By reaching children at a young age (that is, before the world and their parents could impose too much damage to their psyche), children could develop a healthy and strong sense of themselves as individuals and ultimately as Americans. According to Grant, programs offered by the Merrill-Palmer School were part of the "parent education campaign [that] embodied the scientific utopianism of twentieth-century social scientists," and faculty "envisioned the scientific family as the essential level of social change."[74] Educators, like those at Merrill-Palmer, believed that the, "adoption of standard principles of child development by all mothers —

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[73] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of Its First Twenty Years*, 35-36.
[74] Grant, "Modernizing Motherhood," 3-4.

not only educated mothers, but mothers from diverse race, class, and ethnic backgrounds — promised to eradicate differences in American society by imposing a single standard of motherhood on all groups."[75] It was this quest to standardize parenting that led Merrill-Palmer experts into the working-class neighborhoods of Detroit.

Educating Working-Class Detroit

College students who chose a Merrill-Palmer education held similar career goals and harbored like values regarding education, family structures, and cultural influences. They agreed that understanding family relations was the key to interpreting a child's growth, and that observation during the child's early years was necessary for any sort of scientific effect on family dynamics.[76] These students understood the preschool laboratory to be their most important asset in this endeavor, and the nursery school experience became Merrill-Palmer's main recruitment tool. Yet when students arrived in Detroit they often faced new discoveries regarding the perceptions of family. For many of these young women, community extension work would be their first encounter with the urban working classes, and some found themselves rethinking their impressions about appropriate behaviors among families.

By devoting resources to three areas — education, research and community service — Merrill-Palmer faculty hoped to expand their realm of influence beyond the middle-class, college-educated woman and reach into Detroit's working-class neighborhoods. In the School's twenty year report, Edna Noble White wrote:

> The children of a nation are its greatest potential asset, and since the most effective environment ever yet provided for them is the family, its preservation and promotion would seem to be essential to the preservation of society.[77]

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[75] Ibid., 5.
[76] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of its First Twenty Years*, 18.
[77] Ibid.

She noted further that, "contact with community agencies and the families reached by these agencies," allowed students the necessary exposure to "a multivalent world," and guided these young women into developing "greater sympathy and understanding" for those families in need of expert attention.[78]

The agenda to preserve and promote the "family" prompted the School to seek projects with working-class parents. The School's primary contact came through county and state services and the first projects focused on improving the health of these families through changes to their diets. Starting in 1920 and continuing into the 1940s, Merrill-Palmer provided child nutritional training to public health nurses employed by the Visiting Nurses Association and the Detroit Board of Health.[79] In November 1921 School personnel began collaborating with the Detroit International Institute (DII) on agendas that included Americanization, education, and hygiene.[80] That first project studied the dietary habits among various ethnic groups who had immigrated to the United States since the turn of the century.[81] Like many studies of it time, the School's nutrition experts reported that children from these families needed more milk in their diets. A simple solution was to lower milk prices and Merrill-Palmer nutritionists became advocates for milk price adjustments. This study was the first of many undertaken by the School and illustrates how early childhood educators began to affect change in their communities. Merrill-Palmer experts recognized that many families simply could not afford to properly feed their children and set about trying to create concrete solutions rather than imagine abstract policies.

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 40.

[80] International Institutes developed across the country in the early twentieth century out of a recognition by the YWCA that it needed a separate organization which would focus on immigrant girls and women. On the Detroit International Institute see "The Foreign Born and Second Generation in Detroit," UCS, Box 5, folder (Report on the Survey of the International Center Branch of the YWCA of Metropolitan Detroit, 1936)

[81] The study listed the following ethnic groups: Italian, Russian, Mexican, Armenian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, and Swedish.

Yet their advocacy was not void of class bias. School nutritionist Catherine M. Brown observed:

> It is often difficult to consider the nutritional needs of the children adequately in cases where the money is low or the mother is overworked or does not understand the importance of the problem because it seems self-evident that the efficiency of the man who is the wage-earner is the first consideration.[82]

Brown could not understand why a mother would feed her husband before her children; however, she may have misinterpreted the priorities of working-class families. This critical assessment has been contradicted by immigration historian Donna Gabaccio, who studied the ways gender roles influenced change in the lives of families emigrating to the United States during the early twentieth century. Gabaccio shows that immigrant families placed a high value on the health and education of their children, and that they believed they could, through tireless work, ensure the survival of their children in America.[83] It may be true that working-class fathers ate well, comparatively, but immigrant mothers would go hungry before their children had to miss a meal. Nevertheless, Merrill-Palmer faculty continued campaigns to change workers' diets and hygiene by sponsoring extension classes and by training public health nurses and other child-help workers.[84]

School personnel also worked with the American Red Cross and the Detroit Public Schools to try to improve the nutrition and general care of children living in the city. Nutritionists from Merrill-Palmer were invited into elementary schools to help the families of "noticeably underweight" children. While the nutritionists planned to focus on those children whose starved appearance seemed obvious, they soon realized the overwhelming

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[82] Catherine M. Brown, "Study of Nutrition Problems of Different Nationalities, 1922-1923," in MP, Box 37, folder 3 (Foreign Born; Reports, 1921-35).

[83] Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender and Immigrant Life in the U.S. 1820-1990* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

[84] See Leila McGuire, "Classes for Foreign Groups, January 1924-January 1925," in MP, Box 37, folder 3 (Foreign Born; Reports, 1921-35); Sanders, "Parental Education in the Mothers' Pension Department of Detroit," 63-66; and Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training, *Tenth Annual Report, 1931-1933* (Detroit: Merrill-Palmer School, August, 1934), 72 and 77.

scope of their assignment since most of the children they saw appeared underweight. They then shifted their training from the children to elementary school teachers, and taught teachers to incorporate nutrition information into their daily lesson plans. To encourage teachers to enroll in the course, the Detroit Teachers College (present-day Wayne State University) and the Michigan State Normal School at Ypsilanti (present-day Eastern State University) offered the course as extension credit toward the Bachelor's degree.[85]

Nutritional information provided an entree into the lives of working-class parents but the Merrill-Palmer community believed that child care guidance was their most important influence. For instance, School faculty welcomed the opportunity to assist the Detroit International Institute with a child care class for immigrant mothers in September 1927. They soon learned that the attendees, anxious to assimilate into American culture, hoped that new child rearing methods would lead them closer to the American standard of motherhood. These women spoke a variety of Slavic-based languages — Croatian, Russian, Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian — but only English could be heard at the Institute that morning. The mothers arrived with their children in tow, and course instructors suggested that the toddlers might be happier playing in another room with women skilled in the care of young children. The mothers consented, even though the request seemed strange to them. They listened attentively as Merrill-Palmer experts gave them new ways of dealing with their children. At the end of the session, these mothers realized that time spent in the care of a child care expert could benefit their family; indeed, that mother and child could "live out of sight of each other for more than an hour."[86] From those first projects, Merrill-Palmer faculty and students worked to fulfill the needs of Detroit parents from all walks of life, and they consciously extended their expertise to impoverished parents who were otherwise isolated from educational advancements.

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[85] Merrill-Palmer School, *Third Annual Report*, 34-35.

[86] No author, "Report - Cooperation with International Institute, September - December 1927," MP, Box 37, folder 3.

In contrast to many Progressive-Era reformers, Merrill-Palmer educators believed they could both teach and learn from these immigrant mothers. For example, after her work with several different nationalities of immigrants, Catherine Brown noted the benefits of combining a variety of foods into one dish. She wrote in her report on nutritional problems among immigrant families that, "American women" could save time, labor, and money by adding to their family menus the "national dishes of many countries where the food materials served are combined in one dish."[87] A cooperative encounter between the Visiting Housekeeper Association, Merrill-Palmer, and the Italian community produced such an exchange of information. Merrill-Palmer staff visited the homes of twelve Italian families during May 1922 to survey the kinds of foods they ate and the price of serving those meals. Through an interpreter, the women gave recipes for their meals to the Merrill-Palmer nutritionist, who then turned them over to hospital and public health dietitians caring for Italian patients.[88]

These kinds of interactions with immigrant mothers surprised Merrill-Palmer instructors, who found themselves adjusting their advice to recognize some benefits to ethnic food preferences. Rather than insist that immigrant women abandon traditional meals, for instance, the nutritionists invited women to cook for them, and then subtly adjusted the preparation and food products to meet American nutritional guidelines. Through scientific evaluation, instructors learned that a typical meal of pasta with a tomato sauce served the nutritional needs of a family just as well as a potato-based "American" meal.

Biases regarding immigrant behavior and intellect, however, often figured into assessments of these mothers, as some faculty equated a participant's interest and progress in the class with her ability to speak English. Finnish women who "spoke good English" were described as "one of the most interesting and responsive foreign groups" ever taught,

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[87] Brown, "Study of Nutrition Problems," MP, Box 37, folder 3.
[88] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of Its First Twenty Years*, 42.

whereas instructors judged Mexican and Italian-speaking women "ignorant."[89] By the time the Depression hit Detroit, some Merrill-Palmer personnel became impatient with their foreign-language-speaking clients. In her report on an Italian mothers class, nutritionist Leila McGuire complained that, "the mothers were mostly peasant women and very ignorant. Because of low attendance and illness class was discontinued."[90] Class topics had included understanding child habits and discipline for children, important topics indeed, but hardly priority information for women struggling to properly feed, clothe, and shelter their children at the height of economic despair.

Despite these kinds of judgments by a few faculty members (and certainly by some students), community extension work proved rewarding for many Merrill-Palmer women. They enlisted the help of national social agencies like the DII as well as locally-based programs. For example, in the Spring of 1925, they offered a course on child care to a group of day nursery matrons from various settlement house and orphanage facilities in Detroit. Requested by staff at the Tau Beta Community Center, the matrons attended a series of six discussions on the "growth, development, education, and management of the preschool child."[91]

Merrill-Palmer students gained valuable expertise and life-changing experiences by entering working-class neighborhoods. Beginning in 1925, qualified students assisted Wayne County with instructing Mothers' Pension families in nutrition. County administration assigned two families to each student, who also monitored children's body weights and general health conditions throughout the year. In the first year, Merrill-Palmer students attended to the children of sixteen mothers, and County personnel satisfactorily reported their hope for continued student involvement.[92] In January 1929, Wayne County

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[89] "Extension Work with Foreign Groups, 1928," in MP, Box 37, folder 3 (Foreign Born: Reports, 1921-35).

[90] "Annual Report, September 1931-June 1933," in MP, Box 37, folder 3 (Foreign Born: Reports, 1921-35).

[91] "Extension Report, 1925," in MP, Box 32, folder 2 (Extension; Reports, 1923-40).

[92] Sanders, "Parental Education in the Mothers' Pension Department of Detroit," in MP, Box 26, folder 5 (Conferences; Parental Education, 1926), 63-66.

distributed 1,437 Mothers' Pensions, and throughout the 1930s that figure would increase to 2,780.[93] Cooperative training with social agencies, including those sending out public health nurses, allowed the expertise of Merrill-Palmer trained women to reach many of these families.

In an important attempt to reach the working classes, the School conducted a demonstration project at the Garfield Nursery School. Established in 1928 by the Detroit Board of Education, Garfield was devised as a "laboratory for training elementary school girls in child care."[94] In some ways, their work preceded Project Head Start, the federally-funded preschool educational program developed in the 1960s for children who lived in "pockets of poverty" often centered in the inner city.[95] Located in a neighborhood peopled by African Americans and east European immigrants, organizers of the Garfield Nursery School hoped to "provide a suitable environment within a public school for physical welfare, growth, and development, mental and social development, and educational opportunities" for young children two to five years in age.[96] The program differed from most nursery schools in two crucial ways: it combined developmental learning with custodial care found in day nurseries; and instead of training university women to care for children, educators taught these skills to eighth grade girls.

Instructors understood that families using the Garfield program could not be expected to participate in their children's education at the level stipulated for parents using Merrill-Palmer's nursery school. Hence, instructors devoted their attention to the pre-parental training of adolescent girls, developing a rigorous curriculum for a fourteen-year-old. In addition to assigned readings and sets of questions for each unit of study, the ten-

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[93] "Public Relief in Wayne County During Two Decades, 1929-1948," pages 4, 8, 12 in UCS Studies and Reports Collection, Box 5.

[94] Merrill-Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training, *Eighth Annual Report, January 1928 to June 1929* (Detroit: Merrill-Palmer School, May 1930), 31.

[95] As Hamilton Cravens noted in his Epilogue for *Before Head Start: The Iowa Station and America's Children,* the literature on Project Head Start is extensive, but that Edward Zigler and Jeanette Valentine provide a "useful introduction" in their edited work *Project Head Start: A Legacy of the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

[96] Robinson, "The Garfield Nursery School," 39, 56.

week course required each girl to study the behavior of four children in the nursery school and prepare a report on the development of those children. They also spent two hours each day in the nursery school working with the children. This demonstration nursery school extended the work of simply training adolescent girls in child care through their home economics classes to actually doing the work of child care on a daily basis.

The Garfield Nursery School could only accommodate fifteen of the 130 children who applied for enrollment. Program directors worked to maintain an even distribution of ages, and an equal number of boys and girls. They also created racial quotas to maintain an equal number of African American and European American children. The teaching staff included director Mabel Robinson, one full-time teacher from Merrill-Palmer, and a graduate student who assisted one day a week. The Detroit Board of Health also assigned a nurse who examined each student every morning to ensure that only healthy children interacted at the nursery school. In an article to Home Economics specialists, Robinson explained that siblings who attended Garfield Elementary usually brought their younger brothers and sisters to the nursery, and often participated in the work of operating the facility. She noted how many of the functions needed to run the nursery were handled through vocational classes at the elementary school. For instance, boys in shop made preschool-size furniture, toys, and outdoor play equipment while girls in cooking classes prepared the daily snacks and lunches.[97]

Unfortunately, the nursery program contained African American and immigrant adolescents within poverty-stricken neighborhoods. Operators never arranged for the students to venture onto the Merrill-Palmer campus and taste the college life, visits which could have enlightened these adolescents to opportunities outside of their working-class community. Nevertheless, the program did provide a much needed service to some working parents.

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[97] Ibid.

Most community extension projects sent Merrill-Palmer students into white working-class neighborhoods, most often into settlement house day nurseries to both observe the children as research specimens and to assist the under-staffed facilities with child care work. The settlement house day nursery was a foreign place to many Merrill-Palmer coeds, but that world also changed their lives in ways they never imagined. Some students, like Louise Watson, (Class of 1925) opted for settlement house work after receiving her Merrill-Palmer training, and in 1927 began directing the day nursery at the Sophie B. Wright Settlement House.[98]

The experiences of students Ann Linn and Esther Dean Callard also illustrate how young Merrill-Palmer educators reacted when they entered the world of the day nursery. Linn described how she worked with an Italian-speaking family whose father had been permanently injured at the Ford Motor Company in the early 1930s. The man received only $500 in compensation and never worked again. Forced to live on government and community assistance, the family continually struggled to make ends meet. Linn came into contact with one of his children while working in a WPA Nursery in Detroit. At that time, Merrill-Palmer tested each child's IQ and conducted a thorough physical examination. This man's son first tested at an IQ of only 60, but the staff noticed that after interaction with the other children in the nursery, he began to develop socially and even displayed leadership skills: as Linn explained, "a kid with an IQ of 60 doesn't usually do that."[99] Only six months later, the child's IQ increased to 95. The educators attributed the boy's remarkable improvement to his interaction with English-speaking adults and children. Their assessment did not account for the trouble posed by an English-language IQ test for a child whose family did not use English at home. As all IQ tests were given in English, foreign-speaking children naturally tested poorly.[100] Nevertheless, Linn believed that this

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[98] "Report for 1927," p. 6 in FW, Box 1, folder 5 (Reports, Annual 1905-1943).

[99] Ann Linn interview, 17 December 1986, ECOHP, 3. Linn graduated from Wayne State University in 1934 with a degree in education. As an unemployed teacher, she was hired through the WPA to work in the day nursery.

[100] Historian Kathleen Weiler discovered in her analysis of schools for migrant children working in California's agricultural fields from 1920 to 1940, that language posed a primary barrier to

boy's interaction with expertly-trained educators rather than language barriers had far more to do with his improvement at the nursery.

Esther Dean Callard, an education student at Wayne State University, observed the Merrill-Palmer method during a visit to the preschool laboratory. Dean Callard described her vision of children painting and playing freely in the sand as "heaven," and credited her decision to enter the field of child development to that experience. She wanted to introduce other children to the Merrill-Palmer model that nurtured their independent, free-thinking abilities. Although delighted to work in the School's WPA nurseries, Dean Callard encountered cultural clashes in her Merrill-Palmer "heaven." Observing poverty for the first time, she discovered economic oppression's ugly reality when home visits introduced her to floors littered with mattresses. But Dean Callard also realized that one need not enjoy sandboxes and colorful paints to be a happy child. She learned to appreciate Polish immigrant mothers who breast-fed their three-year-old toddlers during lunch breaks from the tobacco factories, hovering over their children with a keen concern for their safety. Dean Callard summed up this initial experience as "very rewarding," explaining that, "I had never been with other cultures and I had a lot to learn and it was difficult." The WPA nurseries opened her eyes to a new world and Dean Callard believed they had "made a great contribution to those children."[101]

Community extension work introduced many Merrill-Palmer students to different ways of parenting while it helped the faculty establish their professional authority in Detroit. Guiding the working-class parents they met in settlement houses and social service programs into respectable, healthy mothers and fathers certainly proved rewarding

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children's ability to understand and digest the information presented to them in school. See Weiler, "Schooling Migrant Children: California 1920-1940," *History Workshop* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 117-142.

[101] Esther Dean Callard interview, 28 April 1987, ECOHP, 7. Dean Callard was born in Detroit and described herself as "always a downtown kid." In the 1930s, Wayne State University created a child development program which became an important place for Dean Callard; after training in its School of Education, she would become a Professor of Human Development and chair of the Department of Family and Consumer Resources at Wayne State. Dean Callard was instrumental in opening a laboratory preschool at the Cass Corridor Unitarian Church in 1947 which remained in that location until Wayne State merged with Merrill-Palmer in 1981.

for many Merrill-Palmer educators. But according to sociologist Julia Wrigley, most early childhood educators defined good parenting through their interactions with parents who could afford to enroll children in nursery schools.[102] In describing her introduction to child study, Florence Willson Duhn, remarked, "Fortunately, fortunately, they [Merrill-Palmer] decided to start with the cream of the crop parents, the best, and then work down to children who were less privileged."[103] Obviously, class position (and, consequently, race and ethnicity) defined parenting skills for Willson Duhn. Parents who could afford to devote attention to their children along scientifically determined lines became the "cream of the crop," and Willson Duhn based her standards on work with "privileged" parents.

Thus, the nursery school remained the centerpiece through which faculty developed Merrill-Palmer enthusiasts. Community service fit nicely into Merrill-Palmer's "experiment" in educating the family; however, public health and settlement programs played a secondary role to advising parents able to take advantage of a nursery school education for their children.

Legacy of the Merrill-Palmer School

Within years of its opening, the Merrill-Palmer School became recognized among social agencies in Detroit as an important educational resource. By the 1920s, mothers across the nation had organized themselves into child study clubs, and child study flourished in the Detroit area within many socioeconomic and ethnic communities. Merrill-Palmer educators took particular interest in this expansion. The School regularly received invitations to facilitate meetings of economically privileged groups such as the College and Women's City Club and middle-class clubs like the Junior League and Detroit

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[102] Wrigley argues that care providers in day nurseries regularly devalued the cultural practices of their clients, and experts generally found fault with what they viewed as absence of nurturing among working-class families. Instead, lack of leisure time forced poor parents to sacrifice hours that might have been spent in bonding with their children to the tasks of providing food, shelter, and clothing to their children. See Wrigley, "Children's Caregivers and Ideologies of Parental Inadequacy," 290-312.

[103] Willson Duhn, ECOHP, 11.

Council of Jewish Women.[104] True to contemporary ideas regarding race, class, and ethnicity, School officials deemed settlement-house parents suitable training subjects for their students but reserved expert faculty interaction for upper- and middle-class, white parents. Detroit mothers were often joined by fathers; only men from the wealthiest families did not express a desire to participate in parent education. Merrill-Palmer administrative reports indicate that husbands of Junior League and Jewish Council women organized their own study groups and met during their lunch hours or in a father's home in the evening.

Working-class parents from all over the city also began to form study groups, including the Tau Beta Community House, Brightmoor Community Center and Neighborhood House.[105] Neighborhood Settlement House parents gathered as couples at the center, and received guidance from advanced Merrill-Palmer students who in turn earned extension work credit.[106] At the Sophie B. Wright Settlement, membership activities in 1936 included two "white mothers' clubs" (Polish) and three "colored ones" (African American). The groups maintained a self-segregated membership and each club concentrated on a different aspect of mothering. One of the African American clubs

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[104] MP, Box 32, folder 2 (Extension; Reports, 1923-40).

[105] Ibid. While the formations of these settlements have been detailed in Chapter two, by way of reminder, a brief synopsis of the three involved with Merrill-Palmer is listed below.

• Tau Beta Community House primarily served a Polish population. A 1930 report for annual usage of their day nursery (opened in 1919) notes high usage among single parents: of an average thirty-five families using the facility, nine were widows or widowers; twenty represented deserted or divorced women and men; and one was an unmarried mother. Most parents engaged in factory and domestic work. Similar statistics are reported for the years 1928 and 1929. See UCS, Box 58, folder 19 (Tau Beta Committee Correspondence and Reports, 1927-32).

• Brightmoor Community Center developed shortly after the Brightmoor subdivision was built in 1922. The housing area consisted entirely of white, native-born, young families; many who had migrated to Detroit from the Southern states to look for work in the auto factories. See Pamphlet File-Neighborhood Houses, Box 3, SWHA.

• Neighborhood House day nursery programs, operated by the Detroit Industrial School Association, were developed in 1913. Located in an industrial area referred to as "Corktown," by the late 1920s and early 1930s programs served a large Mexican/Mexican American community. Maltese, Chinese and some African American families lived in this area, but these numbers remained small throughout the 1930s. See NFSDN, Box 107, folder 8 (Community Studies-Michigan, Detroit, 1948).

[106] MP, Box 32, folder 2.

focused on understanding adolescent behavior while a Polish club learned how to care for young children.[107]

Interactions between Merrill-Palmer educators and Detroit parents reinforced notions of the ideal family as nuclear, white, and middle-class. Although some encounters with working-class parents produced enlightened reactions, faculty and students generally maintained a position of authority and never questioned their right to suggest alternative ways of parenting to immigrant or newly-migrated families.

Students involved with the Merrill-Palmer School in its first twenty years found their experiences invigorating, challenging, and rewarding; as professionals in a growing field, they understood the privilege of training with premier experts. For instance, Marjorie Sanger, who joined the Merrill-Palmer faculty in 1948 as the nursery-school director, described her education as "a very exciting thing to be the student in a generation that could work directly with the very pioneers."[108] Florence Willson Duhn reminisced fondly about her studies:

> Well, they were great, wonderful years because Merrill-Palmer allowed you such freedom to experiment — to change — to say what you thought. If they didn't agree . . . they would tell you so, but if they thought there was some possibility of the thing being better, they would help you work it out. . . It was a flexible, informal kind of school where you could talk with your superiors — you could discuss your problems with them . . . [It] was a wonderful melting pot of students.[109]

Merrill-Palmer alumnae enjoyed active careers in early childhood education but often retired from paid employment while they raised their own children. Although the School's administrators and faculty introduced a career-guidance component into the curriculum and designed alumnae-outreach programs to assist their charges in planning their careers, conventional notions of family obligation prevailed. Most married alumnae chose — like Ethel Childs Baker — to keep the peace at home by putting their careers on hold until their children were grown and out of the house. Many, such as Florence Willson

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[107] Typescript report of January 10, 1936, no author in UCS, Box 67, folder 6.
[108] Sanger, ECOHP, 21.
[109] Langlois, *Serving Children Then and Now*, 26.

Duhn, had been trained at home to accept a female-oriented education and profession. She chose the child-development field as a way to enter professional life without challenging accepted gender roles too dramatically. Willson married in 1933, but not before the School awarded her a graduate fellowship in Physical Growth and nurtured her into a child development expert. She transferred to the nursery school as replacement staff in January 1930 and eventually moved into a leadership position as an instructor.[110] Subsequently, Willson Duhn assisted in a series of two-day workshops for emergency nursery school staff in West Virginia before leaving the School in 1942 to raise her children. For such women, their class standing dictated that as middle-class, married mothers they needed to raise their own children and not use day care themselves. Thus, their identities as mothers rather than as wives removed them from professional careers.

Although motherhood prevented some married women from pursuing a professional career, marital status per se did not influence the selection of graduate students or faculty at Merrill-Palmer. For instance, Mary Frew was shocked when the School admitted her for graduate work even though she had married the very morning of her applicant interview. Frew believed that she had risked losing her spot at the School by informing her interviewer that she was married. But to her "amazement" the School authorities assured her of their eagerness to bring her on board. Frew exclaimed, "I nearly fell over because that was the way it was in the 1930s." Yet she entered Merrill-Palmer in fall 1937 as a graduate assistant in Mental Growth. Frew graduated from the School and left professional life to raise her family, then eventually returned in 1961 as a licensing consultant for the Michigan Department of Social Services.[111]

Merrill-Palmer graduates used their status to lobby intensively for protective childcare legislation in Michigan. Esther Dean Callard became a Professor of Human

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[110] Merrill-Palmer School, *Ninth Annual Report*, 18-19.

[111] Mary Frew interview, ECOHP as reported in Langlois, *Serving Children Then and Now*, 14-15. Frew studied child psychology at Pennsylvania State University and became interested in nursery school education in 1933. She worked in Penn State's nursery school for three years before entering graduate school at the University of Iowa. While there, she taught at an experimental nursery school at the Iowa Soldier's Orphans Home in Davenport, IA.

Development and chair of the Department of Family and Consumer Resources at Wayne State University. She also directed the Detroit/Wayne County Child Care Coordinating Council (4C), and was instrumental in opening a laboratory preschool at the Cass Corridor Unitarian Church in 1947. One of Ethel Childs Baker's classmates, Sally Brown, became the first paid director of the Detroit/Wayne County 4C in 1972. After her retirement, Brown directed the Council on Early Childhood at the Center for Urban Studies at Wayne State University from 1977 to 1987. As parents of Detroit children, these women were actively engaged in educational innovations such a cooperative nurseries, and they taught their children to value involvement in the community. Callard's son became the director of the Franklin Street Settlement and the Bakers were proud of their son's work with the Detroit Urban League. Ann Linn led the move in Detroit to develop cooperative nurseries. After two years with those groups she joined the Franklin Street staff. Linn recalled about that job that she lost twenty-two pounds in just one year, exclaiming, "It was nice fitting into a size 3, but 22 pounds in eleven months! So I think that they [Franklin Street] were doing a tremendous job and it was really too much for me."[112] Linn then joined the faculty at Wayne State University and taught in the College of Nursing.

Students also learned that School faculty provided leadership in shaping national child care agendas, such as establishing parent education guidelines for Depression-era emergency programs and initiating child care supports for workers employed in war manufacturing during the 1940s. Perhaps not obvious at the time, projects like the Garfield Nursery School represented path-breaking work in the world of child care policy. These efforts demonstrate the link Merrill-Palmer educators continued to have with the average Detroit parent. Thus, while its promotional and scholarly literature concentrated on promoting the native-born, white, middle-class and nuclear family as the parenting standard, the Merrill-Palmer community did not turn away from pressing problems that faced many American families. Merrill-Palmer administrators took leadership roles in

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[112] Linn, ECOHP, 10.

advancing cooperative ties between the provision of childcare for working parents and early childhood education. But contemporary attitudes stifled their efforts to foster change; postwar America clung to class-based standards of parenting and cultural biases that deemed the nuclear, white, middle-class model the best for every child no matter what her race or ethnicity.[113]

Raised to believe that children benefited from women who devoted their lives to mothering, students at the Merrill-Palmer School overcame pervasive ideas that treated the motivations of wage-earning mothers as suspect. In the process, they began to lobby for quality rather than custodial childcare for these families. Likewise, in noticing that child nurturing took many forms, these alumnae learned to appreciate the wide range of parenting skills found in a culturally diverse city like Detroit. While not the project set forth by Edna Noble White and her faculty, Merrill-Palmer experts learned after World War II to honor a variety of parenting styles and began to incorporate this flexibility into the School's program. Seeking the "preservation of the family," the Merrill-Palmer "experiment" in early childhood education ultimately guided its community to expand the parameters of family, parenting, and child study.

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The scientific study of the child gained legitimacy during the Progressive Era; by the 1920s professionals from a wide array of disciplines centered their research on children. Mothers and some fathers became active participants in this process at both the study and consumer level, and while they may not have always agreed with experts' advice, they continued to seek out innovative ways to raise a perfect child.

Parental education emerged during the Progressive Era, but it gained popularity during the 1920s because of agendas promoted by early childhood educators. These

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[113] Julia Wrigley, "Different Care for Different Kids: Social Class and Child Care Policy," *Educational Policy* 3, no. 4 (1989): 421-439.

professionals focused on the white, middle-class parent in their efforts to develop healthy, intelligent children, setting a course that took the education of many young children out of the private home and into the hands of experts. To complete this project, Merrill-Palmer faculty asked much of their nursery school parents including the documenting of a variety of behaviors from sleep patterns to reactions garnered from various foods. They also required parents to involve themselves in nursery school activities, requirements that could only be adequately filled by "traditional" mothers who had time available in their day.

School personnel also engaged in a number of cooperative programs with child-help agencies that both served children and educated the Merrill-Palmer student body. For instance, their nutritional classes with the Red Cross Educational Health Program in Wayne County touched 11,000 children in 1923 alone.[114] By training women in the skill of child care — a group that included parents, college coeds, and adolescent girls — Merrill-Palmer experts connected with women already entrenched in the work of mothering as well as those women hoping to someday mother. By observing children in their preschool laboratory and in settlement house programs, Merrill-Palmer enthusiasts inserted their authority as experts into the lives of families from a cross-section of the city. And, by publishing their research findings in accredited journals, Merrill-Palmer faculty and administrators distributed their ideas about securing normality in families to an international audience. In these ways, the Merrill-Palmer School provided direction and professional authorization to the child care agendas being shaped in Detroit, Wayne County, the state of Michigan, and the nation.

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[114] Merrill-Palmer School, *An Account of Its First Twenty Years*, 40.

Chapter 7

NEGOTIATING A "DUAL AUTHORITY": CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE IN CHILD CARE AGENDAS

"The trouble with answers to child care problems
is the answers and the problems don't divide into each other!
Family problems are almost never the same, and right plans for meeting them
are as scarce as manpower. So we all get into these dilemmas together."

— Caroline Burlingame,
Director of Children's War Service, Detroit, 1944[1]

Organized child care evolved from various forms of custodial arrangements to projects designed to educate children, with the private sector taking the lead in establishing these programs. While advocates hoped that each innovation would fit parental needs, the common assumption that mothers should remain in the home colored most solutions. Instead of investing energy into devising better custodial care, advocates eventually focused on educating children who did not require day care, leaving poor children vulnerable to unsupervised or ill-managed care.

Many advocates, however, were forced to confront long-held notions that characterized breadwinning in solely male terms.[2] Experts from the private sector entered homes to understand how the working poor organized their lives, discovering that mothers earned wages in order to survive and not for "pin" money. As social workers, visiting nurses, and educators interacted with wage-earning women, they learned that few working-

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[1] "Conference Proceedings," UCS, Box 96, Folder 10 (Automotive Council for War Production - 1 of 3), 16.

[2] For a discussion of breadwinning as a male-defined role in American society, see Jean L. Potucheck, *Who Supports the Family? Gender and Breadwinning in Dual-Earner Marriages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

class families could afford to live the middle-class ideal of mothers and fathers maneuvering through separate spheres.

But most private sector advocates did not carry the necessary clout to encourage the level of public intervention needed to solve the problem of child care. Indeed, public officials recognized child care as a burden for wage-earning mothers only in times of national crisis: first during the Great Depression when Emergency Nursery Schools employed out-of-work teachers, then during World War II when national security depended on female labor.[3] Likewise, corporate initiatives surfaced only when company integrity was compromised by lackluster attendance and retention rates.[4] Grounded in maternal social reform, charity organizations and public agencies alike dismissed business from the issue by focusing on an agenda that chastised single mothers while rewarding deserted or widowed women with pensions. Their actions created an arena in which reformers used character judgments to decide who was worthy of child care support, making wage earning a key component in their decisions. Reformers regarded mothers who stayed in their homes better parents, thus eligible for state-supported assistance. So independence from a man's wages played against a woman trying to support her family. Thus, keeping women dependent on either the state or a man proved the most popular option for solving child care dilemmas.

Accepting changes in authority often complicated the situation. Private sector challenges to public intervention halted rather than energized initiatives. In general, local advocates understood the full scope of the need, but they held little power in which to tailor

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[3] Barbara Harned, "Relationships Among the Federally Sponsored Nursery Schools of the 1930s, the Federally Sponsored Day Care Program of the 1940s, and Project Head Start," (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1968).

[4] Corporate initiatives are reviewed in Dana Friedman, "Work and Family: The New Strategic Plan," *Human Resource Planning Journal* 13 (1990): 79-89. For analysis of the benefits achieved through program implementation see Alice H. Cook, "Public Policies to Help Dual-Earner Families Meet the Demands of the Work World," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 42, no. 2 (January 1989): 201-215; Ellen Ernst Kossek and Victor Nichol, "The Effects of On-Site Child Care on Employee Attitudes and Performance," *Personnel Psychology* 45 (1992): 485-509; and Sally Lubeck and Patricia Garrett, "Child Care in America: Retrospect and Prospect," in *The Reconstruction of Family Policy*, Elaine A. Anderson and Richard C. Hula, eds. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).

nationally-based public programs to their constituency. Using Detroit and San Diego as examples, consider the manner in which the country dealt with child care during World War II. Ill-planned community development led to housing and food shortages, transportation nightmares, and child care problems for the hundreds of families who migrated to Detroit and San Diego to secure work in the defense industry. Leaders in these cities turned to emergency nursery schools as a stop-gap measure yet they soon realized that these facilities would not meet the incredible demand for child care. As Karen Anderson argued in her study of World War II-era public child care, cities that already had strong private programs in place had an easier time of meeting the intense demand created by the labor surges because they could link private programs with public moneys.[5]

Because a multi-dimensional child care system of nursery schools, day nurseries, and early childhood educators operated in Detroit prior to the war, city officials dealt with the demand in ways foreign to San Diego leaders. The push for quality care by Detroit educators, however, forced them to reject some solutions which could have provided hours of custodial relief for working families. For instance, the strict licensing standards in Wayne County ensured that by 1943 only nine percent of homes applying to provide foster care for infants had been approved.[6] Infant care proved a particularly vexing concern since popular thinking which recommended that mothers with infants should stay out of waged labor guided child care policy. San Diegans took servicemen and their families into their homes, and many mothers boarded in a home with their infant. But residents in Detroit did not open their homes to workers, leaving the mothers of infants with the problem of trying to qualify for one of the rare foster homes.[7]

Child care represented just one of many problems facing San Diego's leaders as they nervously witnessed their city explode with wartime production. In 1941 it had fewer

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[5] Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1981), 129.

[6] Ibid., 139.

[7] "Conference Proceedings," UCS, Box 96, Folder 10 (Automotive Council for War Production - 1 of 3), 18-20.

child care facilities in operation than Detroit, but San Diego advocates seemed willing to work with a variety of solutions, such as family day care homes and an experimental infant care center. For many San Diego mothers — many of whom were in-migrants or wives of overseas serviceman — child care was only one of a constellation of problems that included isolation from family and friends, poor housing and transportation systems, high food prices, and fear of enemy raids, perhaps causing them to demand less in terms of quality care.

Detroit in-migrants did not experience the kind of housing shortages found in San Diego but they did deal with the problem of inadequate child care options. Solutions included extending operations in existing facilities and turning to professional educators to implement new programs. By September 1942, officials lengthened nursery school operation hours from the traditional schedule of 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. to twelve-hour sessions at some war nurseries, eventually creating a round-the-clock facility. Five of the fourteen WPA-operated nurseries changed their shifts to a 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. operation to accommodate defense worker schedules.[8] City officials also invited the nationally-funded social welfare organization, Save the Children Federation, into Neighborhood House to manage a twelve-hour nursery school for defense workers. Organizers designed the "experimental" program to "shift to meet the needs and conditions of working people who must be helped."[9] But infant care remained a problem as educators clung to their beliefs regarding motherhood and infancy; that infants needed to be cared for in their homes by their mothers. The program at Neighborhood House was supervised by alumnae of the Merrill-Palmer School who followed nursery school guidelines which stipulated that attendees must be two years or older. Official continued to overlook the needs of working people and implemented programs that best suited the skills of available experts.

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[8] Dorothy Jones, "Toiling Women Pose Child Care Problem," *Detroit News* September 2, 1942.

[9] "SCF Nursery Pioneers in Child Education," *Detroit Free Press*, 18 May 1942.

Securing child care became one of the most serious concerns for workers and officials in cities that managed multiple defense contracts. Congress passed the Lanham Act in 1941 but only after two years of fighting between the Children's Bureau and Office of Education over the right to administer the moneys.[10] Funds made available through the Act could only be offered to centers known as "war nurseries" which serviced federal, defense-contracted workers. Consequently, many wage-earning parents did not qualify for child care services located in their neighborhood. Moreover, the Lanham Act offered no provisions for the care of children under the age of two years, making it necessary for some families to take the radical action of splitting up their family in order to accommodate work and family responsibilities.

Yet in spite of these problems, the country experienced an expansion of nursery schools in cities where war manufacturing raged. Lanham Act funding established many of these new centers and helped some facilities remain solvent; however, federal criteria left some long-established day nurseries without public support. Nurseries organized in the 1890s — such as Franklin Street Settlement in Detroit and the San Diego Children's Home — did not qualify for Lanham Act moneys because the majority of parents using these facilities were not employed under federal contracts. In those situations, defense workers resorted to uncomfortable arrangements that included boarding their children in foster homes, sending them to live with a relative in another city or state, or even leaving them without adult supervision.

Thus the distribution of public moneys occurred irregardless of the community's needs. For example, by May 1944 the Detroit Board of Education listed for women working in the defense industry the services of forty-four nursery schools. Open twelve hours a day, Monday through Saturday, these nurseries accepted children between the ages of two and five years.[11] The figure indicates the attentiveness of both the city and federal

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[10] "Conference Proceedings — Edna Noble White speech," UCS, Box 96, Folder 10 (Automotive Council for War Production - 1 of 3), 10.

[11] "Roster May 1944," in the general collection at the Burton, Folder: D/Nursery Schools II (Misc. Materials).

government to the needs of working parents; however, the roster did not include some key day nurseries, including those located at Franklin Street and Sophie Wright settlements. The federal government considered six Detroit nursery schools "voluntary agencies," making them ineligible for funding under either the Lanham Act or local War Chest fund. These nurseries lost dollar support at a time when new facilities popped up overnight because they were unwilling to give up their administrative autonomy and the freedom to care for children with nonwage-earning mothers and absent fathers (usually as a result of the war), referred to by the nurseries as "social need children." The "voluntary" nurseries fought as a collective group to avoid being placed under the control of the Board of Education, an action the group labeled as hazardous to both the Board and the voluntary agencies. But they lost their fight and remained outside the funding loop.

This fight to reject a "dual authority" between public and private agencies continues to stymie efforts to create effective child care solutions for working parents in the United States. During the World War II-era, pressure to produce munitions and service supplies for the troops instigated the authority battles, but little seems to have been resolved over the last sixty years. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), passed in 1993, mandates that employers of fifty or more people must allow those workers a leave to care for newly-born children and sick dependents. But has this mandate generated any concrete solutions for the working poor? Since the leave is unpaid, most workers cannot afford to use the benefit. These workers need access to affordable, safe care near their home or work for their young children. Of the twelve percent of U. S. employers who offered child care assistance before Clinton signed into law the FMLA, only one fourth provided a child care center on- or near the work place.[12] Given these statistics one may surmise that little has changed since the day nursery provided "custodial care" for the children of workers living in urban America.

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[12] Ellen Galinsky, "The Role of the Corporation in Promoting Early Childhood Education and Care and Family Support Systems," in *Early Childhood Education: Policy Issues for the 1990s*, Dolores A. Stegelen, ed. (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1992).

One hindrance to finding solid solutions to the child care dilemma lies in the academic review of the issue. Much of the rich dependent care literature — laden with its own value judgments — calls for companies to offer "flex-time" and "flex-place" options, arguing that employees sustain and often increase their production rates when given the choice to work at home during non-traditional hours. Yet authors of these plans overlook the gendered constraints of dependent care. "Flexible" solutions will only return corporate America to a system of out-work where mothers simultaneously perform two jobs: caring for her children while balancing the company's ledger.[13] Moreover, the informal economy — an arena isolated from workplace benefits — may become the leading employer of wage-earning mothers.

Women have earned wages since a market economy developed during the colonial period, and that organized child care has successfully operated in urban America since the 1880s. A woman's ability to secure and maintain gainful employment has long hinged on her success at securing quality child care, but many Americans remain ignorant to the longevity of this problem. Believing that social and economic stability lies in returning wage-earning mothers to the home, some politicians exploit stereotypes that paint children from single-parent households as troubled. Central to their arguments are misinformed findings that slant the realities of the average United States family living in the late-twentieth century. These politicians base their positions on statistics which analyze only the last thirty years rather than incorporating figures dating from women's first major entry into waged labor. "Traditional" voices embrace assumptions regarding motherhood and fatherhood without understanding why these ideas emerged in society. By the late nineteenth century, Americans had fully adopted the concept of the family wage that

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[13] Studies consistently show that when given the option, fathers rarely choose to work at home, while mothers often make that choice. See Maume and Mullin, "Men's Participation in Child Care and Women's Work Attachment"; and DeeAnn Wenk and Patricia Garrett, "Having a Baby: Some Predictions of Maternal Employment Around Childbirth," *Gender and Society* 6, no. 1 (March 1992): 49-65.

defined fathers as bread winners and mothers as care providers.[14] Yet a full examination of women's position in the workforce reveals both the complex history of mothers as wage earners and the struggle to accept social responsibility for helping these women with child care.

Supporters of "traditional values" are not alone in their selective use of data. Labor analysts also use the dramatic increase in the last twenty years of women participating in the workforce (from 40 to 67 percent) to debate the need for a coordinated child care policy.[15] But women are often employed in part-time, temporary positions which provide little or no fringe benefits or opportunity for career expansion.[16] Quality care generally falls beyond the financial reach of most working-class parents and a general lack of state and corporate subsidization forces these parents into accepting low quality child care. Aid offered to under-employed workers generally takes the form of "welfare" and ties a family to state intervention.[17] Thus the pejorative understanding of assistance programs renders users as problem citizens with moral, psychological, and/or economic downfalls.[18] Yet society seems reluctant to re-evaluate the time-honored practice of regulating the lives of

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[14] Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990); May, "The Historical Problem of the Family Wage: 399-424; and Steven Meyer, *The Five Dollar Day: Labor, Management, and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1880-1921* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981).

[15] Data from January 1988, shows 53.9 million women, or 55.9 percent, worked in the civilian labor force; 65 percent which were mothers. Dual earner families increased from 36 percent in 1975 to 48 percent, while single parent earners increased from 11 percent in 1975 to 19 percent. In 1970, 28.7 percent of mothers with children under age six were in the labor force; by 1990 this figure had nearly doubled to 58.2 percent. See Heidi I. Hartmann and Roberta M. Spalter-Roth, "Increasing Working Mothers' Earnings Executive Summary," paper presented to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, November 1991; and "Working Parents: Difference, Similarities, and the Implications for a Policy Agenda," paper presented at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Columbia University, 9 November 1990. Also informative are Jonathan R. Veum and Philip M. Gleason, "Child Care: Arrangements and Costs," *Monthly Labor Review* October 1991: 10.

[16] See Heidi I. Hartmann, "Demographic and Economic Trends: Implications for Family Life and Public Policy," paper prepared for the American Council on Education, Office of Women in Higher Education, Women Presidents' Summit, 5-7 December 1990.

[17] The essays in Linda Gordon, ed., *Women, the State, and Welfare* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) historicize this intervention. For a contemporary case study of this interaction see Betty Sancier and Patricia Mapp, "Who Helps Working Women Care for the Young and the Old?," *Affilia* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 61-76.

[18] Fraser and Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency, 309-336; and Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare.*

the underclass and honor their parental right to choose the care they deem appropriate for their children.

Society's interpretation of dependency has served as the defining feature in the establishment of organized programs for children. The main instrument of organized child care, the day nursery, was established by benevolent organizations in the late-nineteenth century as a way to deal with the problems of urban poverty. By the Progressive Era, it had developed into an important tool for maternal reformers to help save women and children identified as needy. Some of those same reformers turned to parent education in the 1920s as a way to promote increased maternal involvement in the raising of children. But women who earned wages simply could not fit into the image of an ideal mother set forth by parent educators, and many children in need of quality day care remained isolated from such advances. Early childhood educators entered their profession with intentions of concentrating on the parenting skills of middle-class families, and they saw the project of creating educationally-inspired child care centers in working-class neighborhoods as secondary to their interactions with middle-class children. After all, these educators believed that social workers and public health advisors were already dedicated to improving the lives of the working class.

In many ways, the personal commitments and life experiences of advocates who worked in each city defined child care possibilities. Many of these women surrendered connections to their families in order to help those less fortunate; others found themselves rethinking long-held biases regarding the position of their city's underprivileged. Margaret Stansbury, one of the many young women trained in the Hull House tradition of serving the poor, devoted her short life to implementing programs that would help Detroit parents in need of child care. Stansbury used the skills she learned from Jane Addams, including lobbying with her board of directors for additional funds. She also gave up her personal funds in order to help those less fortunate. Edith Shatto King and Helen Marston eventually realized that the Mexican families who used San Diego's Neighborhood House

endured economic hardship because of their ethnicity. Their interactions with mothers who sought out child care assistance at Neighborhood House helped these women overcome cultural biases that taught them to view all Mexicans as lazy and ignorant people.

The evidence from San Diego in particular showed that fathers often tried to provide the primary care for the family, challenging established gender roles that find women as the principle caregivers for all family members.[19] The nation continues, however, to define child care as a female responsibility; indeed, women continue to provide the primary care for most children but we need to better include the work of fathers if we are to help alleviate the work of mothers.

Race and class also claim power in deciding which mothers should leave their homes to work. Society accepts wage-earning by women of color, yet it questions the loyalty of white mothers to family and nation when they enter the workforce. Within their race, middle-class women took responsibility for ensuring safe environments for the children of female workers by establishing the day nursery in the 1880s. College-educated women then entered the arena to professionalize child care, thus perpetuating it as a woman-centered and woman-controlled enterprise.[20]

Class position determined the support avenues available to parents; likewise, the race and ethnicity of a family directed the ways in which people experienced their class position and qualified for assistance. Families in need of child care overwhelmingly fell

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[19] Scholarship on how women care for family members of all ages can e found in Emily K. Abel and Margaret K. Nelson, *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). Fathers' roles, irrespective of their limitations, cannot be ignored when analyzing issues of familial and nonfamilial care. For an understanding of how fatherhood has been constructed see Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (London: Virago Press, 1990); Thomas Laqueur, "The Facts of Fatherhood," in *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions*, ed. Barrie Thorne with Marilyn Yalom (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992); and Maume and Mullin, "Men's Participation in Child Care and Women's Work Attachment," 533-546. Pivotal scholarship on the integration of gender into historical analysis includes Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991); Joan Kelly, "The Doubled Vision of Feminist History: A Postscript to the 'Woman and Power' Conference," *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979): 216-227; and Joan Walloch Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[20] For a historical treatment of the ways in which notions of gender influenced the development of human service professions see Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance," 19-54.

into the working class, a reality that has been overlooked in the crafting of contemporary programs. Options for child care currently favor the needs of middle-class, professional women even though the lives of these mothers differ greatly from the majority of American families. Recent occupational statistics reflect the influx of white, middle-class women into the full-time, professional workforce. Better able to afford quality child care programs, these professionals also possess the bargaining power needed to create or change initiatives. However, the majority of women work in jobs that do not provide a comprehensive benefit package that includes such modern necessities as health insurance and child care subsidization. Low-income families spend one-fourth of their income on child care. The $7,000 annual cost of caring for a four-year-old in a licensed and accredited child care center causes far different effects for a family that generates $80,000 annually and one that lives within $18,000 or less a year.

Another troubling statistic concerns the position of professionals hired to care for children. In spite of the high cost of daycare, professional care providers remain poorly paid and under-appreciated. According to a study prepared for the Child Care Action Campaign in 1989, 94 percent of child care workers are female, disproportionately black, and are better educated and somewhat older than the average U.S. worker. Yet, median wages for full-time child care workers fall below the government-defined poverty level income for a family of four.[21] Not only are their hourly and salaried wages low, but more child care providers work part-time than the labor force as a whole, a situation that contributes to their precarious position in the workforce.

Diverse family structures, mothers in the workforce, and healthy children in nonfamilial child care challenge the legitimacy of traditionalist agendas. Professionals who

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[21] Forty-four percent of child care workers are under age 35 as compared to forty-nine percent of all workers who are that young. As a group, child care providers have 14.6 years of schooling which compares to 12.8 years of schooling for the total labor force. See page 20 of the working paper by Heidi I. Hartmann and Diana M. Pearce, "High Skill and Low Pay: The Economics of Child Care Work," prepared for the Child Care Action Campaign, Institute for Women's Policy Research, Washington, D.C., January 1989; and Miriam Dinerman, "Is Everything Women's Work," *Affilia* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 77-93.

study child care recognize that parenting is culturally constructed.[22] What remains perplexing — particularly when one reads contemporary policy-formation studies — is the insistent cry for mothers to be the primary force in providing care. Catering to popular rather than academic thinking, the research that regards child care as a cultural rather than an inherent quality seems to evade the minds of those in positions of making policy and communicating social norms. Some change has occurred: researchers have started publishing their findings in mainstream rather than academic presses; and developments in academic programming, such as the creation of Gender Studies, may guide a shift in popular ideas. But much work needs to be done to counteract the messages delivered through the popular culture to the average parent living in the United States. Film, television, and magazine creators produce powerful images for their audiences: news anchor Diane Sawyer reveals to a naively innocent couple that they have entrusted their children to horrid day care providers; Madison Avenue depict stay-at-home mothers who are enthusiastically welcomed into the private lives of their adolescent children; and a moral Hollywood that punishes middle-class Moms for leaving children with nannies.[23]

White and middle-class are the crucial characteristics in these images. The fact that in 1987, 62.9 percent of white children were covered by employment-related insurance compared to 38.1 percent of Black children and 39.4 percent of Latino children does not seem to generate the same kind of interest as white, middle-class children being maltreated

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[22] Researchers from psychology to history use different techniques to arrive at the same conclusions. For work that emphasizes the cultural construction of child care see Mary Frances Berry, *The Politics of Parenthood: Child Care, Women's Rights, and the Myth of the Good Mother* (New York: Viking Press, 1993); Shari L. Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994); and Youcha, *Minding the Children.*

[23] *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle*, 1992 is the most obvious depiction of a psychotic nanny (Rosanna Arquette); however, Ann Archer's character in the 1987 "thriller" *Fatal Attraction* was also punished for earning wages. Even though her lawyer husband philandered his way through the movie, the film depicted the women as the real villains, Archer for running a freelance business from her home instead of devoting all her time to her school-aged daughter and Glenn Close's character for choosing career over family. The outcome for Close? Insanity and death! For an interesting analysis of the ways in which film contributed to the 1980s backlash of wage-earning mothers see Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1991).

in day care.[24] Indeed, Americans expect non-white, poor or low-income families to place their children in squalid conditions.

A re-evaluation of current policy needs to incorporate a historical analysis of familial initiatives in the United States, and this dissertation provides an example of this documentation. Advocates in Detroit and San Diego hit the child care problem directly if not efficiently, and a review of their actions can provide important clues for creating innovative ways of caring for the nation's working-class children. The uneven development of San Diego and isolation from academic institutions allowed civic leaders to ignore professional standards when devising child care solutions. In Detroit, rapid development forced officials to institute stop-gap measures for care rather than take time to evaluate already operating programs. Removed from the hub of professional interactions, staff in San Diego did not possess the lobbying powers of reformers in Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York. Early childhood education would be the professional conduit for Detroit advocates to wedge their way into center-stage.

When the members of San Diego's Woman's Home Association opened the nursery in 1888, they believed their actions would provide a temporary solution to a short-term problem. On the contrary, their work lives on in the form of the San Diego Center for Children which has evolved from a day nursery into a care facility for severely emotionally disturbed children. Isolated from the professional vanguard of social reformers, San Diegans continued to care for children under the auspices of benevolence until well into the Progressive Era.

The city's population had doubled by the time the Great Depression hit San Diego, but services to support these residents did not grow in proportion to need. Like most of the country, San Diegans in the 1930s used federal programs implemented under Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal to help them handle the problems of the Great Depression. Established day nurseries, like Neighborhood House, used funds made available through

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[24] CDF, *America's Children*, 7.

FERA to continue operating at a time when few parents could afford nursery fees. But on the eve of World War II, San Diego supported only four day nurseries and a few boarding homes. While the small network seemed to work in earlier times, it proved completely inadequate by 1941.

The members of the Detroit Day Nursery and Kindergarten Association recognized the presence of wage-earning mothers in their city when they created the area's first child care center in 1881. By charging five cents to "any poor mother who wanted to leave her child at the nursery while she went to work," organizers honored the pride of impoverished families who resented the stigma that came with accepting public relief.[25] Their benevolent work led them into the contested areas of child-saving that infused the rhetoric of "care" with renewed verve.

Parental education, however, would be the primary way in which leaders in Detroit would involve themselves in providing child care. The establishment and growth of the Merrill-Palmer School guided the day care options offered in Detroit toward the nursery school model, leaving many working parents without adequate care for the entire day.

The preceding chapters analyzed the ways in which child advocates interacted with city officials and employers to manage working people's child care needs. They also revealed attempts by working- and - middle-class parents to maintain control over their lives by opting for child care that allowed them to decide the futures of their children. The cases used in "Choosing to Care" offer some representation of the lives of the wage-earning parent as they struggled to uphold society's standards of proper parenting. Many of these parents faced great challenges in meeting those standards, especially immigrant families. Obligations to extended family created circumstances beyond a parent's control while economic conditions forced some families to alter their traditional way of living. For example, once in America, mothers and aunts often worked alongside their adult daughters and nieces in the canneries or cigar factories instead of staying home with young children.

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[25] "Story of Franklin Settlement," UCS, Box 37, folder 15.

This dissertation explained how activist involvement has occurred in Detroit and San Diego for over a century. Relationships between educators, nurses, and social workers proved key to implementing change in Detroit and San Diego when advocates argued the workers' case to local businessmen and politicians. Although challenged by some local advocates, the infusion of federal funds and the presence of early childhood education experts made a difference in both cities. Federal money allowed qualifying operations to maintain a low fee structure for parents while providing quality services for the children such as medical attention, hot lunches and educational rather than custodial care. Expert attention helped generate some of those quality services. By 1940, wartime manufacturing caused the nation to recognize the needs of the female defense worker — namely her need for child care — and "war-impacted" cities struggled both to relieve the problem and remain true to a democratic understanding of family.[26] Tensions regarding control of funding as well as the push after World War II to remove mothers permanently from the workforce stunted the formation of a sound child care policy in the mid-twentieth century.

The people in Detroit and San Diego cared deeply about their children but devised strategies that in affect hindered the development of comprehensive child care programs. Public service and private philanthropy worked to serve the needs of Detroit and San Diego families, yet the underlying assumption that good mothers remained in their homes informed both sectors. While changes occurred in varying degrees and at different times, in both cities organized child care evolved from custodial care administered by charitable concerns into day care infused with acculturating agendas. Early childhood educators tried to introduce developmental learning into these programs, but organizational agendas designed to save money often came before client needs. During the World War II Era, Detroit workers turned to the programs located at converted emergency nursery schools; and in San Diego the rise of the family day care home provided some relief for area

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[26] Anderson, *Wartime Women*; Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*; Michel, "American Women and the Discourse of the Democratic Family," 154-167; and Riley, "Caring for Rosie's Children," 655-675.

workers. But neither city could meet the demand despite the intense lobbying efforts by local advocates to increase war nursery facilities.

Since 1945, these cities have seemingly taken vastly different turns: riddled with poverty, racial conflict and economic crises, Detroit has earned the unfortunate nickname of "Murder City USA"; San Diego's near perfect climate has attracted financiers to its coastline since the late nineteenth century allowing the advertising wizards to name it "America's Finest City."[27] But neither label tells the full story. An economic renaissance and efforts to reduce crime have helped Detroit recover from the disastrous 1970s; the reality that one of San Diego's strongest industries remains methamphetimine manufacturing (responsible for the deliveries of hundreds of drug-addicted babies each year) is only one example that belies advertisers' slogans.

Activists do continue, however, to maneuver in both cities to improve the position of workers and their children. Unfortunately, the average working parent struggles with finding and financing quality child care. A comprehensive, nationally-organized child care agenda that addresses cost as well as program design is the first step toward relieving parents from these dilemmas; and launching this effort requires a historical understanding of why American parents need child care.

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[27] *Detroit Lives* ed. Robert H. Mast (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); and Mayor Maureen O'Connor, "Commemoration Letter," May 22, 1992 on page ix of Iris H.W. Engstrand's *San Diego: Gateway to the Pacific* (Houston: Pioneer Publications, Inc., 1992.

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