



## *FESTSCHRIFT*

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF  
**PROFESSOR DAVID GIL**

PRESENTED ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
HELLER SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL POLICY  
AND MANAGEMENT

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY  
OCTOBER 16, 2009

To David

For your commitment  
to a socially just world where  
everyperson everywhere  
lives with dignity

*FESTSCHRIFT*  
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*Facilitator's Note*

It was a pleasure and an honor to have had the opportunity to play a substantive role in the production of this *Festschrift: Essays in Honor of Dr. David Gil*, given to him on October 16, 2009 at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the founding of the Heller School. A *Festschrift* is a book by different authors, colleagues and/or students of a respected scholar, given as a tribute on a special occasion. Literally, the word is from the German *fest* meaning, “feast” or “celebration” and *schrift* meaning “writing.”

I would like to initially thank Brandeis and the Heller School for sponsoring this event to honor David, as his students and colleagues call him. More specifically, appreciation is in order for Claudia Jacobs, Director of Communication Initiatives and Courtney Lombardo, Senior Program Administrator in the Office of Alumni Relations at Heller for their enthusiasm, willingness to work out administrative particulars, and painstakingly search for David’s doctoral students’ whereabouts, notoriously known for being all over the world. Thanks are also in order for those who contributed to this work and certainly to all of David’s students who have continued to work for human rights, social justice, and social change, no doubt, having learned from their mentor, to paradoxically, be their own mentor. We could have also asked some notables like Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and respected colleagues at Brandeis, with whom David has had an affinity. But, we had to draw the line somewhere and chose to include only his doctoral students both present and former. By the way, congratulations, David, for receiving the 2008 Noam Chomsky award, offered by the Justice Studies Association!

The idea for a *Festschrift* first came to me when I was asked to contribute to a *Festschrift* for Dr. Antonin Wagner, then Chair of the School of Social Work in Zurich, whom I met through David at the Heller School, when Antonin was doing his sabbatical. Later, I found that David, with whom Antonin traveled to study with, was also asked to contribute. Upon hearing that there was to be an event to honor David at the 50th anniversary celebration, I immediately thought about such a volume, only hoping that I and some of his other students would have time and energy to carry this through. After the completion of summer teaching and contacting Claudia and Courtney, a letter was sent to David’s students, at least those we could locate, requesting essentially to write a three to five page essay that would honor David and his work. Further, authors were asked to do their own spell check; references, if any, and should follow the format of the author’s profession. The essays are ordered, according to students’ graduation year. Certainly, former students have gone beyond their dissertations. Titles, like labels, often do not do justice to the complexities of a scholar’s or artist’s work. Despite this limitation, it appeared of interest to discern how policy concerns may have evolved over the years given the social contexts of the time. All requests, of course, were optional, or rather “non-coercive,” to echo a term from David. At the end of each essay there is the date of graduation, followed by whatever basic information the author chose to share. In all instances, there is contact information. So, if you want to know more, please send an email.

Generally, I served as facilitator, rather than editor. I must admit, though, it was almost like herding cats in a mountain range, David’s students so curious, risk taking, and all over the world. Given that the request was sent in the middle of summer with a school

semester fast approaching, it is a wonder that we received such a response. Generally, I tried to keep track of and consolidate contributions, making hardly any changes in the essays, filled with the legacy of David's wisdom, knowledge, caring, and tenderness as he served as mentor and guide throughout the dissertation process. But, in reading, I ask that you are mindful of the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, chair of the drafting committee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In referring to the Universal Declaration, she called it a "good document...not a perfect one," adding that there is always something that could be done better. That applies here as well. This collection is not published by a major publishing house with graphics, copy editors, professionally paid peer reviewers, and the like. It is simply by us, David's students, trying our best, as we juggle full time jobs, family, and concerns for social justice to honor him in the way we think would warm his heart and make him proud of us as we are of him.

This Festschrift's dedication is to David's commitment to a socially just world where every person, everywhere can live with dignity and have his or her human needs and rights fulfilled. As David taught, such a world is possible; but the human family must choose to create such a world. Only chosen values endure. Hopefully, this work will provide a contribution, however minimal, so that the values chosen consistently point to our duties towards one another, our shared humanity.

Joseph Wronka

Amherst, Massachusetts

October 2, 2009

*From A Cela To The Guru in the World of Social Policy*

Theodore Chelmow

In the fall of 1999, on the brink of the millennium, I embarked on a large personal journey. The years prior were spent in a human service quagmire, amidst peoples made marginal, including individuals experiencing homelessness, locked on mental health hospital units, or living disempowered in community back wards (group homes). All this hardship was observed and experienced in one of the wealthiest nations in the world. I slid down something likened to Alice's rabbit hole and found myself a Ted in Policy Land. This was a place where the stagnation of accepting things the way they "are" morphed into the way things "could be." This was the year, of course, that I met David Gil.

As a prospective student, the Heller admissions staff, perhaps, had me pegged. At the time I was an outreach worker dealing with the "homeless" in Boston. I wore my hair long, dangling down my back, and fancied myself an activist. Admissions had astutely arranged for me to attend two classes, David Gil's and Jim Callahan's. During that day of visiting a light went on. I heard conversations about human needs, universal requirements which, if met, could enable all people to flourish. I felt that I was not a visitor but an active participant in an ongoing dialogue. If these two classes reflected social policy learning and a face of the Heller School, then I had found a place where my thinking could be challenged and where I would develop new ideas about policy. I made a decision to apply only to the Heller School and entered in the fall of 2001, chasing the elusive white rabbit of social policy theory.

There are many dimensions to learning and education, and for me the notion of truth and reality are potent, albeit painful, teachers at times. David, in his classes has raised certain questions about reality, especially with regard to our own participation in oppressive practices. Issues of injustice can be as simple as purchasing chicken at a supermarket. We fail to consider the long line of people who worked in uncomfortable conditions, with inadequate wages, to provide us with cheaper chicken. This idea of picturing scores of drivers and food plant workers earning minimum wage was not as easy to swallow as the drumsticks I had guiltlessly devoured over the years.

Piaget probably hit the nail on the head when talking about accommodation and the relative discomfort people feel when taking in new information, essentially adopting a new thought paradigm. An infant learns by putting his foot in his mouth. The infant feels anxiety and discomfort when it has to address the fact that this is not the well known finger, hand or arm, but instead is something altogether new. It can not be used to feed oneself, it is a foot. How frequently, as a student of David's, I felt I had my foot in my own mouth. More importantly though, the anxiety or discomfort that David raised, by asking me and others to consider alternate yet very viable explanations for long term social problems, became something of a welcome process. Homeless outreach programs would not solve homelessness. Health prevention programs were, in many instances, dealing with problems long after an opportunity for prevention had presented itself. Like the infant, I experienced "angst." I thought our system mostly did good, that it was very effective and helpful.

David, early on in my Heller learning, raised some fundamental questions which were not addressed in other areas of the curriculum. One question that has deeply influenced my work was the following:

Did I know that I was ameliorating problems rather than working to solve problems?

What a kick in the pants! I certainly felt I was a responsible member of the human services community. I never thought that my actions, or rather inaction, were sustaining people's problems. I was not addressing the roots of social problems. I went home that day from David's office upset and changed in my thinking. I realized I was not exactly marching to the beat of a different drummer, but instead playing some part in keeping people stuck.

Heller, most certainly, has taught a very strong set of skills to its students, including overviews of policy, economics, governance, qualitative and quantitative research. I think of these things as a tool box, but unfortunately possessing tools hardly makes me a mechanic. The research can only go as far as the questions that are posed. David, on a daily basis, asks questions that are "upsetting" as he asks people to question the very basis of their reality, government or our collective behavior. In the same way I felt upset by questions, I realized that others felt challenged or threatened by David's questions, sometimes to the point of distress.

I had the privilege to serve as a student representative on the PhD curriculum committee. At times I would lend my ear to classmates and teachers about things Heller. It was remarkable to learn there was a category of social policy learning referred to as the "David Gil Type of Class" or certain social and economic concepts known as "That David Gil Stuff." In David's classes, forthright criticism of social policies and programs was an important part of the dialogue. In other classes people sometimes took offense to certain critiques of policy and governance, for many faculty and students "had spent the better part of their careers working and contributing to policy research" and didn't seem to want to hear that parts of their efforts may be misdirected, i.e. not examining the roots of social problems.

But it was through all my Heller classes (divided or united) that I learned there are people on the planet providing universal health care to their communities. There are places where basic housing, education, nutrition, and elder care can be had. The inhabitants of these places--indigenous peoples, people from foreign countries, and people in familiar towns and cities--are not any different than us in their human requirements. These "outliers" simply and appropriately regard basic human needs as essential to all members of society.

Another facet of learning that David offers is hope. There was plenty of large scale cynicism and skepticism about the human capacity to engage in wholesale social transformation. Classmates, neighbors, and coworkers galore oft subscribed to the idea that competition and greed were parts of human nature. I went to David, many times, wondering how to counter this resistance. I confess I've never been a scholar of Marx nor am I certain anyone has to be to understand the strengths of living in community, engaging in mutual aid, and redistributing resources. David brings these concepts right



down to earth and has an uncanny ability to cite compelling examples of how we can live today without the pains of meritocracy and capitalism. Simple conversation about people's willingness to pay taxes, to arrange to have their trash picked up, or the functioning of public libraries are examples of the human capacity to share and collaborate. Furthermore, David would not cave into others' resistance to the possibility of a changed world through social policy. David simply stated that people might be frightened when their reality is questioned. Change tends to upset people. Hope, especially when offered with change, engages people.

A teacher is also someone almost ever present in voice and conscience. David's teachings tend to whisper in my ear, like the spirit fighter pilots of the 1940's film "A Guy Named Joe." David's voice tends to help me level off the proverbial plane of life and provide some sane advising through the turmoil of studies and daily living. The teaching transcends Heller syllabi and curricula and has been an ongoing source of guidance through health concerns, vocational foibles, financial challenges, and the growing pains of being a dad.

One other tenet of teaching is the power of setting an example. After 9/11, an understandable panic and confusion seemed to have set in across the country, a confusion that Brandeis was not immune to. At school many classmates began wanting to strike back at the perpetrators, to reset the illusory balance of life as it was before the attacks. Other classmates began to suffer from persecution, especially if they looked to be Middle Eastern. In class David reminded us that having privilege and a large concentration of global resources comes at a cost to us and to others. Our privilege relates to someone's lack of privilege. David's calm quelled fears that civilization had unraveled. The war, as wars do, had also raised both pro and anti-war sentiments. Being in graduate school, I had expected large scale protest to emerge. I was taken aback many times by how quiet the world seemed with regard to voicing opposition to war. Heller, in particular, had many students and faculty afraid of reprisal for their beliefs about the war, whether pro or con. At an autumn protest, I was relieved as David quietly walked up the hill toward Rabb to be in solidarity with a few hundred of us (mostly undergraduates) to protest this war.

And so fittingly I salute David for the hours of teaching, mentorship and being ever present, "eight days a week," to borrow a phrase from the Beatles. Policy land is vast and daunting. I see the years ahead, post-Heller, as both an adventure and a test of sorts. The challenge is to engage in a daily praxis of social transformation. Policy is much less about paper, procedures, numbers and guidelines but instead about the principles which govern the means to existence. Oppressive practices that marginalize individuals are not about people falling through the cracks but rather being born into structural chasms generated by our very manner of living. These chasms are regrettably wholly avoidable. Whatever "That David Gil Stuff" is, we seem to need more of it yesterday, and especially today. We live in a world where there seems to be enough for everyone. To each his own human needs. Thank you David.

With Peace and Love,

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*The Power of Compassion in Education*

Barry Adams

Many Heller students, over four decades, can write about how David Gil's scholarship has influenced their thinking and intellectual interests. As a student at Heller, I have met peers from around the world who talked with me about the influence of David's writing in their own country. It was his work that attracted them to Heller and they traveled around the globe for the opportunity to study with him.

As it was for them, so it was for me. I entered Heller with great hesitation. Many years of searching to understand the context of my life, both intellectually and emotionally, led me to consider the Heller School. However, the reality of my life more closely resembled the early life trajectories described in Ryan and Sackrey's (1995) "Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working Class." Therefore, in order to test the water, I chose to take two classes before I decided to apply to the Ph.D. program. The first course confirmed the source of my hesitation and nearly ended my journey. However, the second course, Work and Individual and Social Development, with David Gil opened a new awareness in me that would greatly inform my future. Among the many insights that David shared during that course in 1999, one comment remains clear in my mind. He said; "We are living in a time, and a society, where language is often used to cover up more than it is to reveal."

David Gil's work on injustice, oppression, violence and human need have indeed changed dramatically my own world view, not only intellectually but, more importantly, in my daily personal choices and practices. However, it was not David's published scholarly work, or even his transformative teaching, that made the largest impact on me. Rather, it was that David was kind to me. He made me feel welcome at Heller. He was interested in what I had to say and deemed it valuable.

The absence of affirmation in one's life can become a driving force. Overtime, its acuity makes recognition of validation impossible to miss. In the absence of human compassion, scholarship is largely limited in its potential to transform a troubled and weary world. My sense of indebtedness and gratitude to David Gil is due to many things. However, the most important for me is based not on words contained within volumes printed, but in the underlying fabric of the man who wrote them.

Barry Adams

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Professionalism as Dissent: In Search of Meaning Within the 2001 Disaffiliation of the Massachusetts Nurses Association From the American Nurses Association.

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*Work and Welfare Debates: Why bother?*

Haksoon Ahn

I initially met David at the Heller School a week after I arrived in the U.S. from South Korea for the first time. We talked about my research experiences with poverty and unemployment policy in Korea. However, I barely understood what he said because I could not understand English very well at that time. Only thing I understood from what he said was that poverty and unemployment issues are the results of capitalism market system. I wondered why. Since then, I have developed my theoretical and research framework on conflict between market and welfare system through various interactions with David, such as his classes, individual meetings, independent study, and working on dissertation on welfare reform with his valuable guidance as my dissertation chair. Building upon my dissertation, this essay reviews historical and theoretical context of work and welfare debates starting from the Poor law in England to the welfare reform of 1996 in the U.S.

Since the Elizabethian Poor Law of 1601 and the reform of 1834, the principle of less-eligibility and the stigma on able-bodied poor have existed in public assistance systems. Poverty was regarded as an individual moral failure. The negative view of welfare recipients was that the poor lacked a work ethic and that the culture of poverty has made welfare recipients remain welfare dependent; thus, the strong work incentive programs would help them to improve their work ethic and to exit from poverty. However, is it true? The view of the relationship between welfare and work seems to be a part of arguments related to the conflict between welfare systems and the market system. Welfare states have responded to markets and protected capital from the negative impact of class struggles. How did the early poverty policies affect the market system and what happened in poverty policies within the framework of changing market systems?

Polanyi (1957) attaches great importance to the Speenhamland settlement of 1795 in England. The Speenhamland settlement guaranteed support for the poor according to a scale depending on the price of bread, and it represented traditional Tory collectivism, which recognized the “right to live” by holding the community responsible for the lives of all its members. The Speenhamland law prevented the formation of a free labor market, something which the burgher class, the owners of the newly created industries, greatly desired. According to the theorists of the self-regulating market, hunger and the will to survive should prompt laborers to work in the factories and their wages should be determined by the mechanism of the market. Thus, public support for the poor was seen as an obstacle to industrial capitalism. However, in England the Poor Law Reform Act of 1834, which is often called the New Poor Law, transformed the traditional poor law, and people no longer enjoyed “the right to live”. Polanyi argues that this new law established the free labor market in England and he regarded this time as the beginning of modern, industrial capitalism. Polanyi said “instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system”. The poor law test was a condition of redistribution. It entailed the stigma of moral judgments about poor people. This stigma was used as the tool of social control of people and the welfare state

protected capital from the class struggles. Gil explains poverty as the result of socially structured and legitimated inequalities with respect to the control of resources, the organization of work and the distribution of rights in society (Gil, 1992).

Titmuss (1968) also argued that the model of 'welfare use' was part of a political philosophy which saw society as an adjunct of the market. The essential, though financially reluctant, role of the poor law was to support industrialism and the attempt in the nineteenth century to establish a completely competitive, self-regulating market economy founded on the motive of individual gain. It thus had to create a great many rules of expected behavior; about work and non-work, family relationships etc. The poor law test was a condition of redistribution. It entailed the stigma of moral judgments about other people. With the limited instruments of policy and administrative techniques in the past, the system could only function by operating punitive tests of discrimination: by strengthening conceptions of approved and disapproved dependencies; and by a damaging assault on the recipients of welfare in terms of their sense of self-respect and self-determination (Titmuss, 1968).

However, Marshall (1964) puts the arguments about welfare and market into a structure of conflict between citizenship and inequality. Marshall argues that citizenship and class create a conflict between opposing principles. Once full and equal citizenship was established, the privileges of the elite inevitably came under attack. The tension between equality and inequality is inherent in the very fabric of modern industrial democratic society. Also, according to him, the original source of social rights was membership of local communities and functional associations. This source was supplemented and progressively replaced by a Poor Law and a system of wage regulation which were nationally conceived and locally administered. The Elizabeth Poor Law was, after all, one item in a broad program of economic planning whose general object was, not to create a new social order, but to preserve the existing one with the minimum of essential change. But at the very end of the eighteenth century there occurred a final struggle between the old and the new, between the planned (or patterned) society and the competitive economy. And in this battle citizenship was divided against itself; social rights sided with the old and civil rights with the new. Marshall regarded the Speenhamland system as a substantial body of social rights. The system offered, in effect, a guaranteed minimum wage and family allowances, combined with the right to work or maintenance. That is a substantial body of social rights, going far beyond what one might regard as the proper province of the Poor Law. The Poor Law was the last remains of a system which tried to adjust real income to the social needs and status of the citizen and not solely to the market value of his labor. But this attempt to inject an element of social security into the very structure of the wage system through the instrumentality of the Poor Law was doomed to failure, not only because of its disastrous practical consequences, but also because it was utterly obnoxious to the prevailing spirit of the times. By the Act of 1834 the Poor Law renounced all claim to trespass on the territory of the wages system, or to interfere with the forces of the free market. It offered relief only to those who, through age or sickness, were incapable of continuing the battle and to those other weaklings who gave up the struggle, admitted defeat, and cried for mercy. The minimal social rights that remained were detached from the status of citizenship. The Poor Law

treated the claims of the poor, not as an integral part of the right of the citizen, but as an alternative to them – as claims which could be met only if the claimants ceased to be citizens in any true sense of the word.

The above arguments on the Poor Law can also be observed in terms of the modern public assistance system. A more radical and controversial explanation has been offered by Piven and Cloward who draw on history, economics, and political science to assert that relief arrangements are initiated or expanded during occasional outbreaks of civil disorder produced by mass unemployment, and are then abolished or contracted when political stability is restored; restrictive policies are used to reinforce work norms (Piven and Cloward, 1971). Furthermore, they observe that the history of work and poverty are linked because periodic destitution is one structural result of social and economic transformations. The welfare state has also expanded in response to pressure from the below (Piven et al, 1987).

Recently, some scholars have argued for the restructuring of the welfare state within the framework of the changing market system. Namely, the recent welfare reform should not be counted as a mere reform of an income maintenance system but as a necessary process which emerged out of the welfare state restructuring occurring since the mid-1970s. They argued that the welfare state has been restructured to reinforce a neo-liberal accumulation regime and to make the competitiveness in the world market the highest goal (Jessop, 1993; Grover and Stewart, 1999). Jessop explains the changing role of the welfare state by using the approach of Regulation Theory. As an approach to analyze the capitalist economy, Regulation Theory explains the economic crisis in the 1970s as a representation of crisis of Fordist accumulative regime, characterized by mass production, mass consumption, and state welfare provisions. Social policy is one of the important instruments of the social mode of economic regulation (Jessop, 1993).

The above arguments on the poverty as the result of socially and economically structured inequalities (Polanyi, Titmuss, Marshall, Gil), on public relief systems to contribute to political economic transformations (Piven and Cloward), and on restructuring welfare state within the framework of a market system to reinforce neo-liberal ideology (Jessop), have the perspective that welfare policy has been subordinated to the needs of market systems. The role of the poor law was to support industrialism and the attempt to establish a completely competitive, self-regulating market economy founded on the motive of individual gain. It thus had to create a great many rules of expected behavior about work in exchange of benefits.

Discussions on poverty policies in the United States have persisted from the initial passage of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in the 1930s to the “war on poverty” in the 1960s, and from what some have called the “war on the poor” and welfare in the 1980s to the latest reform in 1996 (Ellwood, 1994). The term workfare originated in the United States in the late 1960s, with the federal *Work Incentive Program* (WIN). Starting in 1967, WIN amendments were added to what had become AFDC. WIN allowed states to experiment with community work programs, work supplementation programs, heightened job search, and other programs to strengthen the emphasis on work



and improve upon their WIN programs. Under WIN welfare recipients with children six years or older were denied benefits if they refused employment or participation in a training program. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there were several experimental welfare to work programs similar to WIN that targeted welfare recipients. The most prominent of these programs was the *Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program* (JOBS), which was derived from the 1988 Family Support Act (Larrison et al, 2001: Standing, 1990). The JOBS program replaced WIN and was to require much larger numbers of welfare recipients to engage in work-related activities, both by reducing number of exempt recipients as well as mandating that states engage a minimum fraction of its eligible recipients in some type of acceptable activity (called “participation” requirements). In addition, legislation strongly encouraged and partly required states to conduct not only low-cost job search programs that had been dominant in the WIN demonstrations but also some human-capital, education and training programs that would increase job skills of AFDC recipients.

However, over the years subsequent to 1988, states failed to implement JOBS programs to any significant degree. They failed to draw down all the federal matching funds made available to them to subsidize the programs, and they did not put in place the necessary programs to enroll eligibles on a wide scale. As a result, many states never achieved the participation requirements in the Act. The most common explanation for this failure was the onset of a recession in the late 1980s, which put pressure on state budgets and made it difficult to allocate funds to JOBS, but the administrative difficulty in creating JOBS programs was gradually realized to have been underestimated and this also played a role. It was also gradually realized that full implementation of the JOBS would require a significant increase of expenditures and hence was unlikely in the short run to generate cost savings (Moffitt, 2002)

Clinton and the 1996 US Congress introduced what is now known as the Workfare bill. “The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996” was first implemented on October 1, 1996. The new legislation has adopted the “work first” model, and replaced the AFDC and JOBS programs with a new program known as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) with the motto of “Welfare to Work Partnership.” According to this “work first” perspective, education and job training are not effective for unemployed parents and the best way to achieve sustained employment and self-sufficiency is through immediate workforce participation. Workforce experience in the labor market is fundamental to build the skills necessary to maintain employment, and the best way for individuals to advance in the labor force is to build a work history or participate in education and training activities while working (Strawn et al., 2001).

The new legislation reversed the key element of the old AFDC program: the notion that claimants have a social right to receive assistance has been terminated by imposing various conditionality requirements. The most important of these are ‘time limits’ and ‘employment’. The end of cash assistance as entitlement was the major change in TANF. TANF recipients may not receive benefits for more than 60 months during their lifetime, and states may opt to impose shorter time limits and only 20percent of the caseload may be exempted from the time limits requirement. Lifetime limits are a

new concept in U.S. transfer programs and are based on a quite different philosophy of the aims of public assistance than has been the case heretofore. Recipients are no longer entitled to receive cash benefits because of eligibility, and welfare is not a “right” given to someone in a particular circumstance. “Welfare as we know it” is indeed over (Brennan, 2001).

TANF emphasizes that welfare recipients have to become economically independent through workforce participation. Welfare became a program based on independence and personal responsibility through paid workforce participation. The old welfare system, AFDC, was also geared towards moving welfare recipients into the workforce. Under AFDC, however, education and job training were emphasized and welfare recipients could enhance their skills through education and job training. TANF, however, emphasizes employment itself. It reflects a philosophy that the best way to achieve self-sufficiency is not through education or job training; rather, an initial and immediate entrance into the labor force promotes employment and independence. A welfare recipient becomes responsible for his or her own well-being rather than dependent on the government under the new welfare system. Once welfare recipients enter the labor market, regardless of the type of job they receive, they are theoretically moved toward economic independence in anticipation that they will end their dependence on government assistance. The “work first” philosophy considers that any job is a good job.

However, are they really better off after the welfare reform of 1996? My study on economic well-being of low-income families from 1993 to 2002 shows that low-income families became worse off in terms of their net disposable income after the welfare reform of 1996 (Ahn, 2009). Although the employment rate of low-income single mothers increased after the 1996 welfare reform compared with the pre-reform period, their net disposable income declined after the welfare reform of 1996 since the increase in their modest earnings did not offset the cost of leaving welfare nor the work-related costs such as tax expenditures and childcare costs resulting from the work requirements of the welfare reform. Regression results of the interaction term indicating the period after welfare reform and low-income single mothers imply that their net family disposable income decreased by 19 percent after the welfare reform. These findings reveal that working single mothers only moved from welfare poor to working poor.

This essay is a reflection of my work with Dr. David Gil and what I learned from him. I would like to extend my special thanks to him for the dedication of his time, care, encouragement and tremendous mentorship as my mentor, advisor, and dissertation chair. Since I came to Brandeis in 2001, David has always been there for me whenever I needed his help and guidance on academic development, and career and personal issues. I am incredibly grateful for his wonderful commitment to improving my knowledge of social policy. I appreciate his enthusiasm, dedication to his students, and his critical perspectives on social justice and social policy. I also deeply appreciate his help and encouragement for me to continue my work through so many life changes. I want to conclude the essay with one story that I will always remember. While a doctoral student, I was working alone at the Heller computer lab very late on a Saturday night. It was



raining outside, and I was worried about walking to my dormitory in the heavy rain. All of sudden, David came into the computer room and told me “Haksoon, I knew that you were working here so I stopped by to give you a ride to the dormitory.” I will not forget that moment. David is a true mentor and teacher, and I hope to emulate him in my work with students.

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2009

Trend in Net Disposable Income of Low-Income Single Mother Families from 1993 to 2002 in the U.S.: Before and After 1996 Welfare Reform

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*Honoring David on the 50th Anniversary of Heller*

Joyce Hamilton Henry

In 1994, I decided to actively explore getting a doctorate degree. I consulted with several individuals including Dr. Julio Morales who was one of my professors at the University Of Connecticut School Of School and a graduate of the Heller School. Julio spoke highly of the Heller School and of David Gil.

I attended a program for prospective students at the Heller School and listened attentively to the information that was provided. I was inspired by the presentation that David gave and was particularly moved his theory about the cycle of oppression. I left knowing that I wanted to attend the Heller School and to make Social Action/Social Policy my area of concentration.

David Gil is a prolific writer and a great humanitarian. He is an inspiration in and out of the classroom. There were many days when I was challenged by the long commute from Connecticut to Waltham, a full time course load and the responsibilities of a single parent. I spent many hours talking with David about these challenges and always left his office feeling supported and encouraged to persist with my studies. As the Chair of my Dissertation Committee, David was responsive, gave timely and critical feedback and kept me focused. I defended my dissertation in 2007 and graduated in May 2008. I am very proud to say that my dissertation was recently published.

It is with great pleasure that I join countless others in applauding the contributions that David Gil has made to the Heller School and to the lives of so many students. I value the well rounded and quality education that I received at the Heller School and I am truly honored to be among its graduates. Happy 50th anniversary!

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2008

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*Policies and Ideas: A Reflection on the Influence of David Gil on My Work*

Stephen Monroe Tomczak

David Gil was the first person I ever met at the Heller School, when a colleague and I came to visit him at the university prior to our application to the Heller program. We were quite in awe of the whole process. David sensed this, I think, and spoke of the institution, which seemed intimidating to us, as being like any other, with its own practices and procedures that could be navigated successfully. This provided great reassurance, and helped demystify what seemed very formidable and foreboding. This encounter set the tone for a mentoring relationship that had profound influence on my thinking and understanding of policy development in the area of social welfare.

At the outset of my Heller career, while I knew what I wished to focus on in a general sense - means-tested public assistance programs and their impact on poor people - I had a very limited view, I think, of what social welfare encompassed, focusing specifically on narrow programs, rather than on understanding the broader issue of poverty and its relationship to existing social and economic structures. David's early guidance helped me expand my understanding of the relationship of these larger systemic factors to the existence of poverty, and to see social welfare programs as the limited and inadequate response to the problem that they typically were.

One article which he was writing at the time examined what he termed "transition policies" to address poverty and social injustice. This was later incorporated into his book *Confronting Injustice and Oppression*, and had great influence on my understanding of the limited nature of existing U.S. policy to address poverty, and in expanding my awareness of its role in perpetuating poverty. At the time, the debates over "welfare reform" in the Clinton administration were dominating the social policy agenda, and many who believed in social and economic justice were embroiled in defending the old Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. David reminded us that while it was important to do what we could to prevent harmful policies such as the proposed welfare changes from being enacted, it was counter-productive to get caught up, as many progressives were at that time, in defending the existing inadequate programs and policies - in this case, the AFDC program. Instead, a focus on working for effective "transition policies" to address social and economic justice, was what was called for - recognizing that these were, themselves, merely a step toward more fundamental, long-term, transformations needed to establish a more just social and economic order. Thus, he argued, social justice "[a]ctivists should, therefore, pursue simultaneously the long-term goals of comprehensive liberation along with meaningful transition policies, the implementation of which seems feasible in the context of prevailing cultural and legal conditions" (Gil, 1998, pp. 89-90). These transition policies included many of the rights found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Franklin Roosevelt's proposed "Economic Bill of Rights," such as the right to employment, adequate income, child care, health care, children's allowances and other related policies. Clearly, even this went far beyond anything that had been provided historically in the United States.

The reasons for the inadequacy of U.S. policy, and why it was at the time poised to become even more inadequate, interested me. Virtually all of the empirical evidence available at the time demonstrated that many of the proposed changes would do great harm to poor people on a variety of levels. Yet, the policies continued to be advanced, even in the face of evidence that called them into question. Particularly of interest to me were policies ostensibly focused on limiting reproduction by women receiving AFDC. Various terms “Family Cap” or “Child Exclusion” policies, they had first been initiated in New Jersey in 1992, and typically took the form of denying additional benefit increases for children born after a family had begun receiving AFDC. Following their introduction in New Jersey, they had spread to many other states, and been incorporated into the welfare reform “waiver” programs approved under the existing rules governing the AFDC program. They were also included in several of the welfare reform bills introduced in Congress in the mid-1990s and ultimately allowed as a state option under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. Yet, as with many other components of the legislation, there was a substantial body of research that called into question the potential efficacy of these policies, and great reason to be concerned about their potential harm to the economic situation of poor families with children. Despite this, as indicated, they continued to be advanced anyway (Tomczak, 2008).

As I explored these developments with David’s guidance, it gradually became clear to me that a potential explanation lay in the realm of belief and ideas. It seemed that the empirical evidence mattered less than belief that a connection existed between the giving of aid and reproduction by its recipients. David’s arguments for “the central importance of belief, values and ideologies for social policy analysis” informed this line of inquiry at the outset (Gil, 1981, p.28). As I was always interested in the historical development of social policies and the social work profession, I was curious about the origins of these ideas, their history in western society and their influence on policy over time. Knowing something of the history of ideas concerning poverty and poor relief, I assumed that they traced back at least as far as the writings of political economist Thomas Malthus in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, who had suggested just such a relationship between the provision of assistance and reproduction in his famous *Essay on the Principle of Population* (Malthus, 1798/1926, p. 83). Further investigation indicated that similar arguments existed in some form as long as the organized provision of aid itself, although the late 18<sup>th</sup> century first saw their development as comprehensive and influential systems of ideas by Joseph Townsend and then Malthus (Tomczak, 2008).

As I investigated this further, this became the core of my dissertation proposal - and eventually completed dissertation - examining the historical development of ideas concerning the connection between aid giving and reproduction and their influence on policy over time. The focus was not so much on whether an actual relationship existed - although most evidence showed little or none - but on whether policymakers seemed to believe that this relationship existed, and whether this belief was translated into policies designed to curb reproduction by recipients of public aid (Tomczak, 2008). In this, I was greatly influenced by David’s contentions that “[t]he dominant beliefs, values and ideologies of a society, and the customs and traditions derived from them, exert a significant influence on all decisions concerning... social policies” (Gil, 1981, p. 27).

In my study of policies concerning aid to poor families and their relationship to reproduction, I was also exposed to work that David had done in the 1960s arguing for “mothers’ wages” and to the importance of thinking about reproductive labor as analogous in value to productive work in the paid labor market. This proposal was first advanced by David in an article entitled “Mothers’ Wages: One Way to Attack Poverty.” He envisioned it as being “link[ed]...to a system of children’s allowances to which all legal minors would be entitled,” not as a replacement for such benefits (Gil, 1968, p. 230). What it would do, essentially, was to “pay an appropriate wage to every mother and expectant mother for as long as child bearing and rearing tasks kept them outside the labor market. . .” (Gil, 1968, p. 230). David specifically indicated that “[u]nder such a system mothers’ wages would not vary in relation to the number of children under [their] care,” because the “combination” of this program with a system of children’s allowances, “would assure proportionately larger income for larger families” (Gil, 1968, p. 230). In later versions of this plan, this proposal was “redefined as ‘parents’ wages,” in recognition of those situations where fathers, rather than mothers, may function as caretakers of children (Gil, 1992, p. 378). Such benefits were conceived of as replacing targeted public assistance programs such as AFDC with comprehensive, truly universal social benefit systems - and thus would constitute a significant step towards the elimination of poverty. The financing of these benefits, unlike standard social insurance programs, would come “entirely from general revenue derived from appropriate, progressive reform of the federal tax system” (Gil, 1992, p. 309).

Regarding the potential impact of these policies on reproduction, David had noted in the initial article proposing this policy change that “a proposal for mothers’ wages raises many complicated issues” among them, “its effects...on the birth rate” (Gil, 1968, p. 230). These impacts, he argued, “requir[ed] thorough exploration” (Gil, 1968, p. 230). However, in a later analysis of these proposals, he was careful to emphasize that “[e]vidence from many countries...does not support this assumption” that “an increase in the birthrate [will] follow the introduction of such programs” (Gil, 1992, p. 330). In questioning the presumed impact of such policies on reproduction, he noted:

Human behavior concerning fertility is the resultant of a complex set of forces. Economic factors are certainly important elements of these sets of forces. However, the relationship between economics and fertility is not a linear one. While it is probably true that some families are more likely to have children as their ability to provide for them increases with income, it is also true that escape from poverty has usually been followed by decreases in fertility. (Gil, 1992, p. 330).

Thus, the overall impact of these policies on reproduction, in David’s view, appeared minimal - with any potential increases offset by the tendency toward decreased fertility that typically accompanied improvements in economic status. Furthermore, the basis of the Malthusian-like argument against mothers’ wages or children’s allowances was flawed in its essential premises:

The assumption that mothers and families are going to have more children simply in order to obtain additional mothers’ wages or children’s allowances seems to derive from an over-simplification of complex psycho-social processes, especially in view of the fact that wages and allowances per child do not cover the cost of supporting an additional



child (Gil, 1992, p. 330).

Such logic, however, did not stop this thesis from continuing to be advanced, nor did it appear to reduce its impact on policy. Ideas asserting a connection between aid-giving and reproduction continued to be advanced in prominent policymaking circles, as demonstrated in the “welfare reform” debates of the 1990s. This had been evident throughout the history of public aid-giving, to one degree or another. Thus, even though there were substantial reasons for questioning their validity, ideas suggesting a causal connection between aid-giving and reproduction exerted influence not only at this time, but throughout the history of aid-giving to poor people (Tomczak, 2008).

The ideas David had advanced regarding this had influence not only on my thinking regarding why these beliefs existed, and why they had influence on policy - but also pointed to alternatives to the inadequate programs that had developed to meet the needs of poor families with children. The use of means-tested, targeted programs exemplified in the early poor laws, and later reflected in categorical relief programs such as AFDC, lent itself to the influence of charges of “perverse effects” (Tomczak, 2008). The very nature of such programs in singling out people as “poor” in order to qualify for aid made it easy for those not assisted to develop belief systems that attributed presumed “dysfunctional” behaviors to those receiving assistance, which were then erroneously seen as being caused by the programs themselves. Universal programs, such as mothers’ or parents’ wages, offered an alternative which, by aiding all parents, could avoid the use of such charges to reduce or eliminate assistance by attacking and stigmatizing recipients of aid. The advancement of such comprehensive systems of social protection, reflected in proposals such as David’s or in Roosevelt’s Economic Bill of Rights, formed the basis of the policy recommendations offered in my work, along with recognition of the need for more fundamental long-term social and economic changes (Tomczak, 2008, pp. 623-631).

Throughout all this work, David provided guidance and encouragement for my efforts, both directly and through his writings. He recognized that this was an extensive topic that required a great deal of painstaking historical investigation, and was always supportive of my efforts, encouraging me to question dominant assumptions and approaches to the analysis of policy development. One of the elements he really sensitized me to in my work was the use of language. As with many who studied social welfare, I was accustomed to reading about and referring to “the poor,” as the group with which public assistance policy was concerned. David was quick to alert me that such a designation subtly depersonalizes and devalues those forced to endure the deprivations associated with poverty, and that by referring to those affected by poverty as “poor people,” we as policy analysts can act to humanize those we study rather than to inadvertently devalue them with language. This is an important point I have never forgotten and strive to apply in my work.

I consider myself extremely lucky to have had the opportunity to study with a man I consider to be one of the most brilliant thinkers on social policy I have ever met, and also one of the kindest and most gentle individuals I have had the opportunity to know. Unlike many in the academic world, David is also a man of considerable humility. I will never forget the admonishment he uttered to our first year class regarding the

vastness of knowledge and our place as experts in one small area of it: “a Ph.D. is a certificate of ignorance in everything but the field in which you study.”<sup>1</sup> We would all do well to remember this when considering the immenseness of human knowledge and our relationship to that vast world of information and ideas.

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An Examination of the Influence of Ideas Concerning the Relationship of Public and Reproduction on Policy Development

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<sup>1</sup> This is, to the best of the author’s recollection, a direct quote from an early session of David’s HSSW 300A, Social Context of Social Policy course.



*Reflections from the Highlander Center*

Alexandra Pineros Shields

As I sit at the Highlander Center on a mountain in Appalachia, where generations of seekers have come and found the tools, community, knowledge, solidarity, and courage to change their world, I remember and honor my professor, David Gil. From the students of the Clinton 12 to Rosa Parks to the workers of Union Carbide in Bhopal India and the U.S., many have come here to find a safe space that promotes critical analysis of injustice, births solidarity, and inspires courage. When I arrived at the Heller School in the fall of 2000, I found in Professor Gil's classroom that same type of safe space for critical analysis and community building that continues to inspire me to act towards justice.

Here, today, I remember and honor my professor, David Gil. I thank him for the transformative learning spaces he invited us to co-create with him. In these spaces we felt safe to critically interrogate injustices and, through the solidarity that comes from co-creating knowledge, act for justice. Here, today, I bless the transformative space we created together because it has led to my liberation and, I believe, in turn, to the liberation of others.

I characterize David's classrooms as safe because he shared the power of his classroom with his students. By sharing decision-making power with all his students, we dismantled the standard authoritarian structure of most classrooms. The lack of the "power-over" relationship between teacher and students established the necessary condition for genuine uncensored dialogue. Only in safety are we free to interrogate ourselves, our intellectual commitments, and the world around us. By creating learning spaces where we felt safe to express our thoughts freely and share our actions, David facilitated our personal transformation.

The learning that David encouraged was built on critical analysis of our realities. Through his framework for understanding social policy and through provocative questioning, he promoted a critical interrogation of our personal experiences and belief systems as well as the texts we wrestled with. By persistently challenging us to dig deeper and deeper to unearth the root causes of the unjust dynamics we were individually concerned about, he enabled us to construct new paradigms for understanding. "In whose interest is this?" and "Who profits from this?" he often asked us. This critical analysis of our own assumptions and political commitments to situations of injustice raised our consciousness and gave us lasting tools we can apply to structural analysis of many dynamics. Again, by teaching us tools to deconstruct our personal and ideological commitments, Professor Gil facilitated our personal transformation.

Over time, in each of the three courses I took with David, I witnessed the gradual building of community. His pedagogical strategies blossomed into a learning community because safe, democratic decision-making creates the conditions where trust flourishes and on this trust community is built. The collective nature of our critical inquiry also encouraged the development of solidarity with each other's experiences and political causes, indeed, with marginalized groups who had not been the subject of our own

inquiry or past professional work. As we learned about each other's passions for justice our eyes were opened and our own worlds grew. By promoting learning spaces that encouraged free expression, critical analysis, and democratic decision-making, all students were enlisted as teachers and thus co-creators of the collective knowledge being constructed. The act of being teacher/learner simultaneously, of being a co-creator of knowledge deepened our leaning community and facilitated our personal transformation.

Finally, Professor Gil's vision of education, indeed, of a university, is predicated on a commitment to dismantling boundaries, whether intellectual or physical. Our classroom was an open learning space. I remember Professor Gil encouraging me to invite a former student of mine to co-present our work in adult education in New Hampshire. Kathy, a young woman from a rural community, dropped out of high school as a teenager, had a child, and was mandated to attend GED classes by state welfare regulations. After sharing her story with our class, David, shared that he was also a "high-school dropout" except that he had been "dropped by the Nazis". This revelation inspired one of my classmates to share that he had also dropped out of high school. Kathy was so inspired by our class discussion that she insisted on staying for a dissertation seminar on the estate tax. As I drove Kathy back to New Hampshire, she expressed awe at having been able to understand our class discussion. Learning that people who had not been able to finish high school, like her, were Ph.D. students and professors opened her mind to applying for admission to the local community college. The transfer of knowledge between the "subjugated knowledge" of the rural poor and the formalized knowledge of the academy was not an isolated event in Professor Gil's class. On another occasion, as we discussed low-wage workers in the global economy, while on break, we invited one of the Heller janitors to join us for the second half of class. This man from El Salvador shared his story of civil war and economic exploitation. Through his story and the questions we asked, some of our assumptions about the causes of migration and about globalization were problematized. We took turns doing simultaneous interpretation so he could understand our discussions and participate fully in the conversation. After class, our janitor, whose labor made our learning possible week after week, was delighted to have been invited to teach and to learn in the classroom that he kept clean but was prevented from active engagement with. Finally, by breaking down the walls that separate "academic" knowledge from the "subjugated" knowledge of the people, Professor Gil facilitated our personal transformation.

Here, today, at Highlander, a site of transformative learning for radical social change, I thank Professor David Gil for his passion for justice, his courage to break down the walls that inhibit the truth, and for his loving concern for us, his students.

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2007

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*A Letter of Thanks*

Doris Landau Fine

Dear David,

Following the request of an essay to be included in your *Festschrift* I thought about how my years at the Heller School impacted my life. As you may remember, I arrived at Heller in mid life and career. When people asked me why I chose the Heller School rather than a doctorate in my field, physical therapy, I half-joked that the parking was more accessible than at Boston University, my undergraduate alma mater. In fact, I wanted a new perspective and understanding of the medical, social, and educational challenges facing children with significant developmental disabilities and their families.

I was nervous about returning to school after 20 years as a pediatric physical therapist and university lecturer. As I stumbled through statistics and economics someone suggested that though your courses did not obviously fit my predetermined plan, you provided a unique classroom experience that was not to be missed. I was intrigued by your wide ranging and unique reading list. From the first class I felt your profound commitment to exploring the forces that deny people basic rights and dignities. You opened doors to entire areas of study and literature I had not even known existed, and books, including your own, that I treasure. Your classroom provided an island of free discussion, exploration, and the occasional deeply felt argument that was not always the stuff of other classes. I became a better teacher for having been your student.

As I was interested in disability rights and policies I discovered, like many others, Professor Irving Zola. In Professor Zola I found a teacher who challenged me to think far beyond my role as a clinician in my work with children and families. With great humor and the joy he brought to every aspect of his work he became my mentor, and eventually the planned Chair of my dissertation committee. I was only weeks away from presenting my proposal when Professor Zola died, leaving so many people and causes far too early.

For the next several months I put my proposal away and wondered if I would ever have the time or emotional energy to begin the process again. My children were entering adolescence – a busy and demanding time – and my job was taking some interesting and challenging turns. I eventually came to you with my ideas, doubts, and questions, and with the kindness and wisdom that came to define all of our interactions you convinced me to start again and offered to act as the Chair of my committee.

What I remember most vividly of those first meetings was your interest and insistence that you would enjoy learning with me as I explored aspects of a topic that was unfamiliar to you – the educational experiences of children with severe disabilities and their families. You encouraged me to invite your friend and colleague Gunnar Dybwad to join my committee, and I am sure that he agreed in great part because he trusted you to nurture the process to its completion. As I gathered the rest of my committee, Professor Constance Williams and Betsy Anderson of the Federation of Children with Special Needs, I came to realize that with your guidance I created a community of people who shared my interests and offered their time, expertise, and support at every turn. Your

knowledge, leadership and gentle push (when needed) provided the foundation that kept all the pieces in place and moving forward.

The process took on a life of its own and was often put on hold as I awaited responses from potential study participants or procrastinated in writing this or that piece. You let me lead the way, but also provided a structure that kept me going. You responded almost immediately to questions and concerns, and often offered startling insights into the work and writing. You always made me feel that the questions I asked were important, and that my personal and work experiences brought value to the project. When life – terminally ill friends, family obligations, work related travel– forced long periods when the dissertation had to be put aside, you understood and encouraged me to find ways to keep the process in motion. Perhaps your greatest gift was your understanding of and respect for the constant flow of work and life that shapes all of our lives.

That I am among those invited to contribute to this *Festschrift* and honor you on this important occasion is a testament to your wisdom, patience, and dedication. In my current work in a school for severely disabled students I try to share what I learned from my research and work at Heller with young students, therapists, and educators. I hope that I encourage and help colleagues through friendship and care in the same way you guided and supported me. For all that you gave me I can only say thank you.

Your always,

Doris Landau Fine

2001

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*Mistaking Social Welfare in the Grow-or-Die Political Economy:  
Re-Imaging Social Welfare as Concern for Well-being*

Otrude Nontobeko Moyo

Recently, I was reading assignments of my students in an undergraduate class *introduction to social welfare*. The assignment was a reflective piece on students' worldviews. Basically, the assignment asked: "describe your own worldview and presuppositions about well being." Some guiding questions were provided to facilitate the reflections.

One student wrote a page and half of the assignment and most notably in his writing was: "...I find it hard to write this essay...I am a twenty year old and have no clue about my worldview...to be expected to care and attack every problem in the world is ridiculous so I look to satirical news programs such as the Colbert Report and the Daily Show".

Frankly, for a second, I was annoyed by the student's response, not because of the mentioned talk shows (which I find personally objectionable) but at the presented empty arrogance. I expected more from the student, at least a commentary of the ideology espoused on the Colbert Report and Daily Show and how these shows influenced his conceptions of social welfare. Instead of wallowing in my displeasure I began to use the presented 'cluelessness' as a teachable moment about social welfare, therefore the title of this essay: *mistaking social welfare in the grow-or-die political economy: reimagining social welfare as a concern for well being*.

The seeds to 'seize the moment' to extend critical dialogue is what I took from my student days with Professor David Gil (who by the way was ok with David). This essay is both an engagement in dialogue about social welfare as it is about honoring a student of society, a public intellectual, a great teacher and mentor. I say a great teacher because David was not interested in the 'diagnosis of my handicaps' as a student as reflected in the above example of my own reactions to my student, rather he cared to learn about each one of his students, paying particular attention to what we had to say for ourselves. As a teacher, David encouraged my learning through deliberative dialogue and reflective writing, he would, say 'write as a way to know, write to provide and create radical and newer alternatives to enhance well being'. I have continued to write as a way of knowing, for example, my first book *Trampled No More: Voices from Bulawayo's Townships about Families, Life, Survival and Social Change in Zimbabwe* extends a socio-political and economic lens in understanding the collapse of the Zimbabwe's political economy and interrogates grow-or-die economy and its connections to global corporatocracy, reflections of Professor Gil's mentorship. But, most important reflective writing has become part of my learning as a teacher too.

*The Logic of a Grow-or-Die Political Economy*

No time in my lived experience, has the world come to know itself, its troubles and the environmental damage and costs of the growth-or-die economy than the present day.<sup>1</sup> With improved communication technologies we have been able to witness the

human and environmental cost of the disorder of free-markets. Ferguson, Lavelette & Mooney (2002:14) assert that while there has been a dramatic increase in the overall 'wealth' of the planet, an ever greater concentration of wealth is in the hands of fewer and fewer people of the world.<sup>ii</sup>

What is apparent in the logic of *grow-or-die political economy* is the fact that it has already inbuilt and prescribed winners and losers. Nowhere is this apparent than in the case of global migrations. It is the corporations, the highly skilled and citizens of the materially richer nations that are already prescribed winners. They are 'the cosmopolitans' who can easily follow capital wherever it is concentrated. The losers, poorer peoples of the world jostle for the opportunities to reach the centers of capital concentration however, their migrations are often met with fiercely fortified fortresses. These fortresses are fortified by exclusionary immigration laws enacted by those who profess to be staunch humanitarian individuals and their nation/states. In the scenario of global migrations, the concern of social welfare would be to make 'fair immigration policies'. However, the paramount question is: Can there be anything fair in an exclusionary system? It is under these circumstances that the mistaking of social welfare is written, to attempt to make fair yet in actual fact policies are fortifying affluence for the few.

The way we mistake social welfare came alive for me in one of the deliberative dialogues we had in Professor Gil's social policy classes. I remember one of the questions that Professor Gil often posed was: *What is social welfare?* As a social construct, it was clear to all of us that social welfare did not have a commonly identified meaning but what captured my interest then and now has been the separation of social welfare from well being and quality of life discussions.

### *Mistaking Social Welfare*

I remember, as a student we spouted our understandings of social welfare as: the way to manage dependency, the way a society provides human services to 'special populations' (that was the word in my time), and in this vain addressed the 'residual' and 'institutional' approaches to social welfare skillfully noting the socio historical context of the development of the reluctant welfare state in the United States. We talked about social welfare as a discipline and finally, we would arrive at the contentious descriptions of social welfare as a 'moral category' and the stigmatization of poor people who reach to public assistance to survive. And, it is in the last descriptions that the politics of social welfare is actively engaged. Again, this is where the mistaken identity of the concept of social welfare lies.

Our responses as students to the question: *what is social welfare* were deeply rooted in our heritage of ideas of a political economy set to maintain affluence for a few. In this context, social welfare is seen as managing dependency; should services be provided in an institutional or residual way and what should be function of social welfare? Care versus control? Today, in the conversations I have with my students our ability to see social welfare and understand social welfare remains in the narrow, hinging on the archaic *grow-or die* development models, often propped by the governments to maintain the interest of the few affluent.



Currently, when such questions as: *what is social welfare* are raised, it always feels like a game of avoidance is being played. We would rather not talk about the destructiveness of capitalism therefore avoid being labeled a communist, therefore, my euphemism *grow-or-die* political economy.<sup>iii</sup> Perhaps, if I did not directly question capitalism then, the discussion might perhaps have an audience and perhaps its destructions will become more visible.

I have come to realize too; that sometimes it is not a game of avoidance at all but the very fact that social welfare premised on well being is incompatible with *grow-or die* political economy. Under the *grow-or-die* political economy questions of well being can only be tokenistically raised. Recently, I was irate when I came across a call to conversations to ‘improve access to justice in Maine’. In this case, a call to improve access to justice does recognize the disparities but wants to continue to preserve them.

In my view, if social welfare was reimaged as ‘well being’ the questions of quality of life would be at the center of our discussions and the deliberations and the questioning would center squarely at the very existence of capitalist system and how it undermines well being. Indeed, most economic and policy scholars are not avoiding the question but they are set on another path, that of softening capitalism, humanizing capitalism and would argue that “...if people as individuals could simple change their moral stance with the respect to nature and alter their behavior in areas such as propagation, consumption, and the conduct of business, all would be well (Foster, 2002:44). The presumption is that all the destructions of a *grow-or-die political economy* will go away if society compels individuals to be more socially responsible.

In recent history, nowhere are the ideas of increased individual virtue translated as societal morality been so propagated and articulated than in the mantra of ‘a thousands points of lights’ of volunteers as substitute for collective action and most devastating; voluntarism as substitute of government actions. It is the mistaking of social welfare that the politics of poverty plays on: with one side seeing collective actions to care for people through the instrument of government as a ‘handouts’ that are discouraging work and a heavy tax burden on the righteous who work hard, the other side not going too far in their protections of affluence for a few. In this politics what is all too often overlooked is that there is no justice where there is injustice embedded in the political economic system. There is no compassion in an unjust political economy. There can be no compromise about injustice and therefore, no conciliation. Cohen (2006:172) argues that there can only be an expose of the destructiveness of the policies that support affluence of the few. Anything aiming short of this is premised on collusion, complicity and co-option.<sup>iv</sup>

**Notes:**

- <sup>i</sup> Foster, J.M. (2002). *Ecology Against Capitalism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- <sup>ii</sup> Ferguson, I. Lavelette, M. Mooney, G. (2002). *Rethinking Welfare: A Critical Perspective*. London: Sage Publications
- <sup>iii</sup> See Chodorkoff, Daniel. Redefining Development. Chordorkoff is the co-founder and director of the Institute of Social Ecology. Retrieved from: [http://www.democracynature.org/vol3chodorkoff\\_development.html](http://www.democracynature.org/vol3chodorkoff_development.html). September 25th, 2009, 3:25pm.
- <sup>iv</sup> Cohen, Steve (2006: 172). *Deportation is Freedom: The Orwellian World of Immigration Control*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publications.

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*Nurturing Human Development*

Rick L. Shifley

Too few individuals in my life ever practiced what they preached – be it modeling effective interpersonal communication, working actively for social justice, or fostering all aspects of human development. David was, and remains, an exception in that he does try to practice what he preaches. I believe David thinks that how we – children, community members, students, or employees – are treated has long lasting influences. And this influence needs to be recognized and acknowledged in order to help us practice, as well as create, policies that meet basic human needs. Thus, for David, his life, not simply his work, has been a model for better practices of human interaction.

David's attention to student-centered learning underpins his practices at Heller. His timely, well-reasoned suggestions for improving a paper, his willingness to calmly explain his ideas, his encouragement to students to stay on topic when in class, and his active encouragement to continue the long march toward a degree are active demonstrations of support.

Now that I work as a teacher to future health care practitioners, I realize how difficult it is – knowing that my students are influenced by what they see and feel for longer periods than they might imagine - to treat each and every individual according to his or her own unique needs. The problem is that many of my students are not used to seeing individuals being treated equally. Their experiences in such social institutions as work and school have, in the name of efficiency and productivity, restricted their expressions and actions. What they have observed and experienced directly is that some individuals – because of position, not necessarily because of skills – are allowed greater freedom of expression and access to more information than others. David's concern is that in restricting some, but not all, we create social structures that do not permit full human development for all.

There is the need to acknowledge the benefits of some restraints, but there is also the need to affirm the losses that many of our current social arrangements impose on all of us. I realize how challenging it can be to broaden awareness - David would probably say consciousness – about our social structures. Based on what I've learned and researched with David and at Heller, I think it is important to ask my students if there is more to life than a well paying job, for it seems as though the stability and security a job might offer is the principle hope of many students. The challenge is to build on that hope by asking if they might also want a job in which an individual's ideas are sought and the individual is valued. Generally, the answer is yes. And at that moment, at that time the seeds that were and are David's ideas of how we might create social arrangements that foster human development are planted anew in others.

Rick L. Shifley

2001

Constructing Work — a case study examining the organization and functioning of a participatory work organization

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*I Welcome This Opportunity*

Everett Lilly

David Gil touched my life and that of my wife in ways he doesn't know. It's really my fault for not letting him know so I welcome this opportunity. I have, for the past 12 years, been Director and professor in the Social Work Program at Mountain State University in Beckley, West Virginia. My wife, Karen Cummings-Lilly is the Field Coordinator in the same social work program and her life has been touched in countless ways by David's positive influence as well. I often think of David as I walk across the parking lot to the building where I teach. Such has been his contributions to my life. I hope the narrative that follows at least begins to capture the wonderful influence David has had on my life, that of my wife, and even that of our students.

I first met Dr. Gil when I enrolled at the Florence Heller School and attended an open house attended by students and faculty. At that time I actually didn't know who he was except I noted he was friendly and genuinely interested in all of us. His concern was with us and what our plans were and the attention was specifically not on himself. I know this as I reflect back now but wasn't so aware of it then.

Eventually I took some classes with David and I will describe that as a powerful experience. Having grown up in Clear Creek, West Virginia and having witnessed and been part of the poverty here I already had a non-blaming perspective. Of course part of that came from my social work training at Boston College as well. But David's courses looked at the myriad of social and human problems in ways I had not previously considered. I discovered our own lives were intertwined with many of these problems in ways I had previously not considered. As "progressive" as I thought I was, I found myself examining the world in new ways and my critical thinking skills took a sharp upward turn. It was liberating and challenging. At first I wanted to take in the information selectively and then go on my way confronting the world as always. But of course that was short lived and I found my life and my way of thinking being transformed.

When my advisor moved on I chose David and, when I completed my courses and passed the comprehensive exams, I asked David to serve as Chair for my dissertation committee. I ended up with two from Heller (including David), and two from outside Heller and one of those was a Heller graduate. As anyone will attest the dissertation is an experience no one will forget. Because of relocating to California and undergoing some life changes, my dissertation was essentially on hold for a number of years. I was engaged in research work on this but wasn't able to make a lot of progress and I accepted this as temporary. But I found that David called regularly to check on my and he always did this with genuine concern, interest, kindness, and helpfulness. I came to know him as someone who "practiced what he preached." David absolutely endeared himself to my wife, Karen, a social worker and my wife since 1991. It was during our early years of marriage that David would call me in California. Karen has agreed to add something about this and so her account (written by her) is as follows:

“How well I remember David Gil’s early morning phone calls. (We are late sleepers and get up at the last minute even on work days). I would usually answer the phone, half asleep and hear David’s wonderful accent. ‘Is Everett there?’ I would laugh to myself knowing Everett that he had not completed as much work on his dissertation as he had hoped, so he both dreaded and looked forward to the phone call. I would call out to Everett, “It’s David Gill” (imitating his beautiful accent). Everett would go into a mild panic and say something ‘Oh, no. What am I going to say?’ I would hand him the phone smiling as Everett always knows what to say. His conversations with David were quite pleasant. I must say, though, without David’s dedication and caring, I doubt Everett would have kept on track with his dissertation. David deserves so much credit for believing in Everett’s ability and willingness to complete his dissertation after taking an extended hiatus. I learned a great deal from David vicariously through the relationship he had with Everett. I learned never to give up on students. The importance of social justice and taking a stand. The true dedication of a professor to his student. David is probably one of the most influential people my husband has ever encountered and having met David, myself, he is truly an amazing human being. Thank you, David, for your gentle persistence. Your phone calls have impacted numerous others through Everett and me.”

I thank Karen for being willing to include the above paragraph and I must say those early morning telephone calls were priceless! Karen and I have talked about this many times over the years and always with good humor, admiration, and appreciation. I remember needing to see David one particular summer and, since he was going to be visiting his son in California, he graciously invited me to his son’s home to have the meeting. I remember Karen going with me and the wonderful visit we had.

It took me some time to complete my dissertation including a return to Heller for some additional required course work. David recognized my major interest was in more qualitative research approaches and he steered me to Constance Williams who was teaching qualitative research at the time. “Connie,” as we called her also graciously agreed to serve on my dissertation committee. The dissertation process is probably not easy for anyone and what I remember was David’s consistency throughout the process. And how well I remember sitting down with David in his office a few minutes before the formal hearing regarding my dissertation. One doesn’t easily forget moments like that. I had a really good and talented committee and so I knew it would not be particularly easy. I remember thinking about the meeting to take place and how David had been so encouraging throughout the process leading up to this. The meeting went well and I embarked on a new chapter in my life. I still didn’t realize how David would continue to influence the rest of my life.

As previously mentioned I became a professor and Director of the Social Work Program here at Mountain State University some 12 years ago. I teach courses in social policy, research, poverty, music and culture, etc. and I also am an adjunct professor with the West Virginia University Graduate Social Work Program. Recently I was teaching a graduate course in management and supervision and, in the first session, I thought of David any number of times as I prepared for the first session. I spent much of the first class session going over all of the things I thought the students needed to “unlearn” regarding false assumptions and approaches regarding management and supervision. Oh

yes, I talked about the faulty assumptions underlying much of the way management and supervisions is done, the shortcomings of the standard textbooks on the subject, the inconsistencies between exploitative management and the NASW Code of Ethics, etc. I'm sure you get the picture. The subject of social justice comes up very often in my undergraduate and graduate policy courses as well as many others. I teach alongside a professor who has a Ph.D. in social work and of course he is a big policy person like I am. My wife has interacted with us on countless occasions and, over a period of years, she has incorporated more and more of the policy and social justice perspectives in her Introduction to Social Work and practice classes. She is considering a Ph.D. program in her future and is seriously considering going the policy route rather than practice. Our social work students are largely poor and of Appalachian descent. They are aware of the exploitation and injustice in this part of Appalachia from personal experience but they benefit greatly from the perspectives we bring to the classroom.

I am not sure if David realizes the tremendous contributions he has made including this part of Appalachia. It is heartwarming to realize my very soul and way of being have been changed for the better. The majority of our social work students are from this region and are truly disadvantaged as were the fathers and mothers who came before them. Because we understand oppression and the dynamics of oppression we have a perspective which enables the social work faculty to make extraordinary efforts to keep these students in school. More than anyone it was David Gil who helped mold this perspective and it now makes all of us more sensitive to the needs of these students.

In another part of my life I have a music group called The Songcatchers which is a traditional, multi-generational music group of Appalachians from age 10 (my young daughter) to 60+. We perform at professional conferences as part of educational workshops on music and culture that I present and we have had wonderful success in appearing on venues that enable us to promote and preserve music and culture in this region. The group is essentially egalitarian. We don't even consider the amount of money available (or not available) for our performances. Whatever money we do make goes into a central fund for the group. Occasionally we pay for group members to attend a music convention, etc. The money is always divided equally for such things. No one ever receives more than another unless it is for expenses. Our goals are not about making money (and of course we have the luxury of being able to do this). I've done a lot of very rewarding things in music over the years but this group, based on an egalitarian approach, is the most rewarding.

In my new Appalachian Issues class there is a goal of students coming away with a plan for what they can do to improve conditions in this region. Though it is early in the course we are already talking about the historical exploitation of this region (especially by the coal industry). I will be providing the students with an example of a coal miner who once started a coal company in Appalachia owned equally by him and the other miners. I will share with them the success of this company and what one might learn from such egalitarian approaches. This region remains a rich land and a poor people and there are many problems here that stem from the same causes.

To sum it up David has influenced my life in so many ways and all for the better. My life has been so much more enriched since my days at Heller and what I learned has followed me in almost every area of my life. I will forever remember David Gil as someone who touched my life to the core and one of the few great teachers I have encountered. I am forever grateful and remember him with such great admiration and fondness.

Everett Lilly

1997

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*My Lighthouse, My Rock and My Chair – Professor David Gil*

Rochelle Lizette Rollins

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand.

- *Frederick Douglass*

In 1991 I was an AIDS activist working as the Research Director of the Multicultural AIDS Coalition, Inc. in Boston. It was a small non-profit but I had the agency head's full support to pursue doctoral studies. That fall I entered the Heller PhD program as a Pew Fellow and single mom to a 2 year old son. Heller was everything I expected and more. From the beginning, I knew that I wanted my dissertation to focus on AIDS activism but I didn't have a clue about what qualitative methodology to use and who to have on my committee. It was a blessing and probably a necessity that I found my way to your office. You were my lighthouse when I got lost, my rock when I needed support and the Chair of my committee. He helped me identify other members of my committee; Professors Connie Williams and Irving Zola. And when grief struck in the passing of Professor Zola, you helped me regroup and move forward. Grounded theory was the perfect methodology for my dissertation which was entitled *A Seat at the Table: A Case Study of Collaboration Between AIDS Activists and AIDS Researchers in the Design of AIDS Clinical Trials*. I cherished the time we spent together talking about the themes that developed from my interviews with AIDS activists and the NIH researchers and administrators.

Today I am a Division Director in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health in Washington, DC. Although I am a federal public servant if you scratch my surface there is still the spirit of an activist. I also serve on dissertation committees and encourage and mentor a wide range of future thought leaders. Not a week goes by that I don't think about you and the lessons you taught me about activism and public health policy. It was quite a gift. My son is now 20 years old and studying at Syracuse University. My hope for him is that he encounters faculty as supportive as you have been to me and countless other students. Your fingerprints are all over the world. Thank you. Thank you for everything.

Rochelle Lizette Rollins

1995

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*Of Course You Ask the People*

Lisa Dodson

David understood that we would learn a lot about the United States by listening to the people; those who are usually left out of talk of the nation. When I told him that this idea was at the heart of my doctoral research, he said, “ya, of course.”

I set about my study in the early 1990s, hoping to learn about life in single-mother families from the people living in them. At that time, there was plenty of statistical research around about the “correlates” of teen pregnancy, the problems experienced by children in low-income families, and the economic cost of welfare. We knew where poverty was concentrated, that non-marital births were associated with poor children, and that the impact of deep inequality spreads out into the community and ultimately, the whole society. But at that time there wasn’t much inquiry that started with the assumption that people who are poor actually know something about their lives and have insight into the problems that their children and families face. The standard was – and still is, for the most part -- that *we* choose variables of interest and then carefully design research to study them. But to start by asking people, particularly those who are living poor, how best to grasp their world, well, to David Gil that made a lot of sense. I am very grateful for that. With his support, I was able to pursue the work that I most wanted to do. David’s sincere interest, openness to think with me, and most of all, his encouragement to ask the uncomfortable questions was essential to my earliest work and I have always been thankful. At this moment of honoring David what I want most to tell him is that I am still hard at this work, still asking the people what they know about their society -- just as he would expect.

Lisa Dodson

1993

Worthy of a Voice

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*Sharing My Story: Towards an International Convention to  
Abolish Extreme Poverty (CAEP)*

Joseph Wronka

One of my first encounters with David was at a distance at the Heller doctoral student orientation when his first words were: “The homeless are victims of capitalism.” I had heard through the grapevine, while teaching and working in various human service programs in Alaska, that Reaganomics had taken a strong hold in the “lower 48,” as the continental US was sometimes called. Higher education, including top notch schools like Brandeis, was no exception. Only vaguely familiar with some of David’s work on unemployment as a predictor of domestic violence and intrigued by Heller’s brochure about his concern for social change strategies to create a democratic-socialist commonwealth, I decided, upon learning of my acceptance, to take a risk and venture down south. After all, the state representative from Interior Alaska, Nilo Koponen, a socialist and Quaker, often showed up at meetings of Amnesty International, of which I was group coordinator. I thought Koponen was a good man. This “David Gil,” also a socialist, I thought must also be a good man. His first words were a description of the mission of the Center for Social Change at Heller. Next, a visit to his office decorated with decals of Amnesty International conspicuously placed on his computer and desk only reaffirmed my suspicions. I feel now as I did in September 1987 that going to Heller was an excellent decision and that somehow it was meant to be in the scheme of things.

It only got better as I heard David speak of the centuries of western imperialism and colonialism that had enabled the United States to have the richest per capita income in the world. He then stated that the US spends close to 50% of the entire world military budget and asked: “Is this because the US wants to protect its wealth?” I immediately noticed the grimaces and some eye rolling on the faces of some students, but I was eager to hear more. Having recently worked in a small Inuit town, Kotzebue, in the Arctic, which apparently had some of the highest rates of social problems in the US, I felt that I had witnessed how western imperialism was ruining an indigenous culture. The Inuit had a spiritually and morally rich culture with a long history of sharing and cooperation - yet alcoholism, domestic violence, homicide and suicide seemed to affect them disproportionately. This is not to romanticize the Inuit, but to point out that these social problems appeared symptomatic of a culture, fallen prey to a supposed free market. Alcohol, for example, was extremely profitable and readily available. As an alcoholism counselor for some time I saw how Alaskan Natives were not accustomed to even small amounts of alcohol, resulting in “the shakes” after only one drink!

These experiences only validated my previous experiences as an undergrad traveling in some of the poorest countries in the world where I witnessed families, as far as the eye could see, begging on blankets, for a few coins or for just a glass of water. Not far away, I noticed on more than one occasion a café with largely European and American clientele drinking Coca-Cola and Pernod at prices nearly fifty times as much as water which locals paid for. Was this an example of the “tentacles of imperialism” that I learned about when studying Marx’s “law of progressive pauperization?” Did the profits go back to Atlanta or Paris? Wouldn’t resentment build among the local community leading to violence if not downright war?

Based on those and other experiences, David's affinity for Marxist ideas on class warfare, his ideas on global structural violence, and his understanding of war as counter violence in response to unjust social and economic arrangements made so much sense to me. I also heard David speak of the need to write and speak in educated layperson's terms, rather than retreat to elitist terminology and to go beyond systems and transcend the encapsulation of disciplines. Having had a background in phenomenology which wants to "go back to the things themselves" and humanistic psychology which believes that human experience is too varied and "multi-mosaic" to be reduced to one discipline or theoretic construct I couldn't help but feel that I was in some kind of "intellectual heaven."

What struck me most about David, however, was that despite his international reputation as researcher and intellectual regarding violence against children, I felt he was always humble and non-pretentious. I showed David the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, saying "this little 30-article document says a lot of what you are saying about socially useful work, reasonable wages, security in old age, human development, and the right to a socially just order. Amnesty International does great work, but it is just a little part of the picture." He immediately read it and said "It does, doesn't it? I didn't know that. Thanks for showing this to me, Joe." Our enthusiasm for that document eventually crystallized into a dissertation that compared the Declaration with the US federal and state constitutions. Apart from protection of an author's interests, an "educated layperson's" reading of those documents revealed no mention in the US constitution of economic, social, and cultural rights, like rights to education, health care, adequate shelter, employment, security in old age, rest and leisure. State constitutions, which ought to act as "laboratories of democracy" according to former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, emphasized the right to education, not the other important economic, social and cultural rights. These later rights are indivisible and interdependent with civil and political rights that Americans are generally knowledgeable of, such as freedoms of expression, religion and peaceful assembly. After all, what is freedom of speech to a homeless person who lives in a world at war?

The dissertation was eventually published as *Human Rights and Social Policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (University Press of America, 1992). My love for human rights has only continued to grow as I recently developed my work into a textbook called *Human Rights and Social Justice: Social Action and Service for the Helping and Health Professions* (Sage, 2008) with its own Instructor's Manual including, sample curricula, PowerPoint slide shows, lecture notes, questions for discussion, and social action activities. Thanks again, for the Foreword, David. I have found this work extremely exciting and rewarding, even more so, when seeing some students putting these ideas into action. To put it bluntly, I am having a blast!

Most recently I was appointed Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva for the International Association of Schools of Social work. Last year I gave a talk on the need for an International Convention to Abolish Extreme Poverty (CAEP) quoting in part former President Jimmy Carter who, upon accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, spoke of poverty as the root of violence and war. Such a convention, furthermore, would have the status of Treaty, which according to Article VI of the US Constitution,

The Supremacy Clause, must become law of the land. Such a convention would have more judicial force, so to speak, than the Millennium Development goals, which recognize aspirations, rather than serving as a legally binding contract, such as CAEP. I gave the talk to David along with some other documents I picked up at the UN. I will never forget the message I got on my phone one early morning about the talk. “It was excellent” he said. I know that when David says something is excellent, it is. It has been such a wonderful experience having his support over the years.

To this day, I still recall how David offered me the opportunity to apply for grants with his then Center for Social Change when I received my doctorate. He offered to have me serve as Principal Investigator for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Project, which, among other things, was to monitor U.S. compliance with the Universal Declaration, particularly its economic, social, cultural and solidarity rights. This offer occurred after I shared a rather unpleasant experience I had at a major human rights conference in Boston. Briefly, back in 1992, I spoke of the need to put more emphasis upon the “other” sets of rights, like rights to health care, meaningful and socially useful work, adequate shelter, security in old age, special protections for children, and global distributive justice. One of the main speakers told me that those were issues of social policy and not human rights! Another continued: “If you say anything more about poverty, you are going to make me cry.” The audience then laughed. When I told David about the experience he told me that social policy has everything to do with human rights and we should try our best to expand people’s consciousness about economic, social, cultural, and solidarity rights. Later, I was offered a teaching position in the School of Social Work at Springfield College. With two little ones crawling around, David felt it would be better to pursue a tenure track position, rather than spend most of my time writing grants. Typical of David’s generosity, he did continue to offer me the title of Principal Investigator, saying that we could still work together time and resources permitting. Thanks, David... for so much.

Joseph Wronka

1992

An Analysis of Human Rights Principles as Defined by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Comparison with United States Federal and State Constitutions: Implications for Social Policy

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*Rights, Justice, and Practice: Professor David Gil and How He Inspired My  
Work on Disability Policy Reform in Taiwan*

*Kuy-yu Wang, Lisa Wang*

Even today, most people who think about disability consider it a personal and private issue rather than a legal (civil rights) and public issue. From the charity perspective, disability payments are nothing more than a vehicle that allows the provision of more direct services and more cash to people with disabilities. The academic community in Taiwan has adopted this charity perspective instead of viewing disability policy an academic discipline involving in-depth discussion and debate on human values and human rights. David instilled in me his belief in the value of human beings and social justice, a belief I still hold today. Moreover, these two fundamental values have influenced my work and my professional life in the last two decades.

I will begin the body of this essay by describing my studies at the Heller School in the late 1980's and early 1990's. This is the time when the Reagan administration was in its second term, and social policy in the United States was dominated by the implementation of conservative reforms, the major thrust of which was deinstitutionalization. All the papers, articles, and books that I read and learned from during this period were focused on this conservative movement. In this context, it was quite a learning experience for a foreign student such as myself to study at the Heller School; we all know that social policy is deeply rooted culture and society, and this fact made it hard for me to grasp all the policy debates, not to mention which side took which position on a certain issue and on what grounds. Nonetheless, I found the learning process so stimulating and productive that I formed the habit of spending all day Sunday reading the local newspaper to catch up on current issues and debates. I thank David for his class, in which he approached social policy from a structural perspective rather than at a micro level such as budgeting, cost analysis, or professionalism. He asked us to challenge ourselves and to ask what is at the root of all the problems we were studying and discussing. As a Taiwanese student, I was used to taking things for granted and never questioning or challenging the root of a problem. To think critically about the capitalist system and the assumptions behind its operation was, for me, a challenging task, and to this day I have continued to accept this challenge in my research and teaching in Taiwan. I cannot say that I have all the answers, but at the very least David taught me that different societies embody different lifestyles.

My thesis focused mainly on the disability policy of the Taiwan government in the early 1990's. I was particularly interested in the following question: Given that an adequate standard of living is a basic right, why has the government not explicitly defined the minimal living conditions necessary to receive government aid? This question seems very simple on the surface, but after I returned from the States in 1991 I devoted the next twenty years or so of my life trying to answer it. Determining where to draw this line for the distribution of welfare benefits, as well the fundamental assumptions informing this decision, is a very subjective process and not a purely scientific issue. Throughout the world, disability policy has been centered on maintaining a basic living standard for people with disabilities. Nations vary in how much emphasis they place on

enhancing work ability versus direct financial aid, and Taiwan is not immune from this choice. According to the Taiwanese or Chinese cultural tradition, providing people with disabilities a decent living is seen not so much a right as a community responsibility. In other words, Taiwan's policy with respect to delivering services to people with disabilities reflects the traditional charity position, rather than the view that such services are basic rights and a matter of social justice. It was under the influence of this Chinese/Taiwanese societal assumption toward people with disabilities that I began my professional life and my research on the disability issue in Taiwan.

My post-graduate work began in 1991 in the Department of Social Welfare at National Chung Cheng University. The university was just beginning to build its campus and start its program on social welfare policy. During my first year there, I was assigned to help to the university move from its temporary rented campus to its just completed permanent campus. It was a long and hot summer break, and my colleagues and I spent most of our time setting up our offices and classrooms in addition to developing the social welfare program. Back then, most departments of social work in Taiwan focused their programs on providing students with basic social work training; none focused on social policy issues, not to mention disability issues. Our department adopted the Heller School system of providing social science student with broad training in sociology, economics, and political science. We also focused on quantitative data analysis rather than qualitative training.

During the last twenty years, as my department grew, I began to build my own career in the study of disability policies. During the first five years, I spent most of my time reviewing the current status of disability policy in Taiwan and gaining basic knowledge about how the system works, its underlying assumptions, and the problems involved in its implementation. This was a period when Taiwan was facing internal demands to expand its welfare system. Disability policy, along with the associated challenges from various disability groups, was one of many welfare issues that the government had to face. Even today, few members of the academic community are devoted to this area of study, despite the fact that at the practical level the relevant service systems are expanding dramatically. In the mid- 1990's, pressure from disability advocacy groups forced the government to begin revising the relevant disability legislation. I personally played a vital role in the process by introducing the concept of human rights into the policy statements that later became the legislation.

My involvement in this process was a new experience for me. My intent was to make the principle of justice an essential element of the law. There are three major substantive policy areas in which rights were introduced into the legislation: the right to work, the right to an education, and the right to health. Welfare was classified in this framework as implementation method of legislation. Since the passage of the legislation, and as part of the expanding process of creating substantial rights for people with disabilities, the Taiwanese government has consistently spent a huge proportion of its budget money to provide financial aid to people with disabilities. The actual implementation of these rights was assigned to administrative units within the central governmental: the Ministry of Education carries out specific policies related to the delivery of services in special education, the Ministry of Labor is in charge of developing



and implementing specific employment policies, and the Ministry of Health is responsible for implementing health-related service policies. In my view, these new assignments of different governmental administrative offices to take full responsibility for various aspects of the planning and delivery of specific services for people with disabilities are a major breakthrough for welfare legislation in Taiwan. It took me nearly three years to fulfill my role in this process of revising the Legislation on Rights Protection for People with Disabilities to make it concretely reflect the principles of human rights and social justice. We still have a long way to go to fully provide and ensure the rights of people with disabilities in Taiwan; passing the legislation is just the first step.

The preceding paragraphs discuss some of the ways David influenced my professional career as a researcher, but he also influenced me as a teacher. I learned from him that teaching is an excellent way to inspire students to think for themselves and to take action on what they believe in. I like to work with students on their projects and theses. The most enjoyable part of being a teacher and professor in Taiwan is to see students open their minds and express their ideas out loud. Throughout my twenty years of teaching experience, whenever a student would come to me with all kinds of questions, I always reminded myself that there is no perfect way to turn an idea for a topic into a completed thesis unless one exerts a lot of effort and really digs into the topic. This realization was inspired by David's way of working with his own students, and it has kept me doing what I do over the past two decades.

I remember David telling me that getting an advanced degree is just the first step; what you do with that degree is another matter. In the beginning, I was upset with all the pressures that came with my job; but now, nearly twenty years later, I am beginning to have a better idea about what I am doing and how to make day-to-day decisions without feeling regret. I know now that being critical does not necessarily mean I am a bad person; it depends on how I present myself to my colleagues, students, and friends. I truly appreciate what David has made me become. I have always considered the best of the many examples he set for me **and** his non-judgmental attitude toward the issues we discussed.

To transform such abstract concept as rights and justice into the practice of delivering services and programs is a constant challenge for all of us in the field of social policy. My training at the Heller School included excellent disability-related courses and seminars that I found very rewarding. It is fair to say that this training opened my eyes and ears to the updated debates in the ID/D area. David's class, in particular, provided me the opportunity to be a critical thinker and to refine my Chinese style of arguing about principles with other people.

For many students such as myself having an advanced degree from the Heller School means that we endured a sometimes hard and critical training process. But even though the process was often unbelievably harsh, we all survived and learned something important from the experience. Not only David, but also the other professors who taught me, had an enduring impact on my career development and my research in Taiwan.

Every year for the past twenty years I have tried to make a return visit to the Heller School and see David. In particular, I had the opportunity to attend the Heller School's celebrations of its 30<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, but I don't know whether I will be able to attend the next one. That is why I am so glad that at this time, Heller's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I can pay this personal tribute, with eyes sparkling, to David and his wife Eva. At the end, all the hard work paid off, and I still have the energy to spend another decade or so fighting for the rights of people with disabilities in Taiwan. When I was young, I thought that I would be trapped in Taiwan my entire life and could never go anywhere else. To study abroad was for me a major challenge. To travel abroad at least three times a year, as I do now, was unthinkable to me five decades ago. It was the Heller School's training that made me more confident in myself, and it was David and his mentoring that made me humble about our work. This work will not be finished as long as people suffer under all kinds of conditions and for all kinds of reasons; all the papers we publish and conferences we attend are just part of the process of making this world a better place to live. Thank you, Joe, for inviting me to write this short essay to express my heart-felt appreciation to David; at the end, we all must go back to the real world and continue our professional work.

Kuo-yu Wang, Lisa Wang.

1991

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*A Tribute to David Gil*

Carol Brill

As a colleague, friend, and ex-student of David Gil I am so pleased to be part of this well-deserved tribute to him. David is a remarkable human being. He is a complex man who is a wonderful combination of superb teacher, outstanding intellectual and committed activist. He is someone with a deep value base that he really lives by and is integrated into his writings and actions. David is consistent in his underlying beliefs and in his radical analysis of social, political, and economic issues. He has worked all his life against social injustice and for a just world.

Whatever David does he throws himself into. He is a fine humanitarian who cares about what happens to humankind, and also what is going on with a particular person to whom he is relating. At brunches with Eva and David, which my husband Harry and I enjoyed regularly when we lived in Massachusetts, we ranged from talking about impediments to world peace to how our grandchildren were doing. A wonderful aspect of David is that as productive as he is as an author, teacher, activist, and presenter he is first and foremost a husband, father, grandfather and friend.

Not the least of David's accomplishments is that he has influenced so many people. David has been a mentor to me and many others and a role model par excellence. Even though I now live in California, and mainly communicate with David by phone, I very much feel him with me. I still find myself mulling over what he would think about a particular issue or idea. I know that he would certainly have a thoughtful opinion.

I started this tribute by talking about David Gil the man. Now I want to focus on the impact he has had on the social work profession, and then on the influence that he has had on my career as an example of the broader impact that he has as a teacher, role model, and mentor.

#### David's Impact on the Social Work Profession

David has been a consistent, clear, radical conscience of the social work profession. His groundbreaking books, articles, and presentations have turned a spotlight on social and economic injustice and its impact on people and institutions, including agencies where social workers practice. He has focused on the responsibility of social workers, agencies, and educational institutions to see social work practice in this context and to integrate this analysis into both diagnosis and treatment plans. But further, he pointed to the responsibility of social workers and the profession to work for progressive social change.

David's seminal research on child abuse is a good example of his conceptual framework. His work challenged the then prevailing approach to child abuse, which was to basically look at the deficits of the parents/family as the problem. David focused on the social and economic problems in society which were key to understanding child abuse, and the changes this analysis should lead to in evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment planning as well as in institutional and public policies.

I became more and more aware of David's research, articles, and books during my over 30 year tenure as the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. His focus on social injustice and radical analysis of social issues and problems resonated with me and others in the social work profession. He was always willing to write for the Chapter and National NASW's newspapers, and to do presentations both nationally and locally. His influence has been widespread.

#### David's Impact as a Teacher, Role Model, and Mentor

I know David has had a great impact on his students as a teacher, role model and mentor. I thought I could best illustrate this using myself as an example. I clearly saw David as a role model and felt lucky to have him as a friend and mentor. When I took my position as Executive Director of Massachusetts NASW the majority of my prior experience was as a clinical social worker and a mental health clinic chief social worker, plus experience from my political activism. I felt that I needed some more formal education in social policy and planning and so became a part-time Ph.D. student at the Heller School. I found David's perspective compelling, so I took all of his courses. It was natural that he became my thesis advisor.

As a teacher David was highly successful at presenting the course content and his ideas within the context of a truly democratic class atmosphere. His excitement about what he was teaching was truly contagious.

David was a wonderful thesis advisor. He read my thesis material within days, and returned it with extensive input. He was always available to meet and our interchanges consistently stimulated my thinking. This is a hallmark of David. Whatever he does he has a unique perspective and stimulates people to think. I remember one particular conversation very clearly. I told him I wanted to look at the impact of the social justice content in the NASW Code of Ethics on social work practice "No," said David, "what you want to look at is the content on social injustice of the NASW Code of Ethics." A small distinction I thought at first, but in reality it was not a small distinction at all. This was also a clear example of how in everything he does David continually focuses on the injustices in this world and how to change them.

I want to end this essay by giving an example of how David has impacted my professional work. I know that he has similarly influenced many others. Social work ethics became a major professional focus of mine. I am sure that you can imagine how David's classes and our discussions influenced my moving in this direction. When I was asked to be a member of the committee that wrote the current NASW Code of Ethics it gave me an opportunity to work to integrate content throughout the Code on the responsibility of social workers to take action on social, cultural and economic injustices. One of my key areas of professional activity is working to help social workers understand the values of the social work profession, particularly as embodied in the content of the NASW Code of Ethics that relates to social injustices. My studies and analysis have led me to conclude that there is a growing gap between social work values and social work practice, which is fostered by social and economic problems in society. Whatever the topic I am writing on or speaking about I have always included a section on this growing gap between social work values and social work practice. I have focused as well on the

responsibility of professional social workers to not only be cognizant of this but also to work against social and economic injustices in both social work institutions and in society. It is easy to see where having David as a role model and mentor influenced my professional work.

So congratulations David. Thank you for all the contributions you have made and will continue to make to individuals and society. Thank you for being a voice for people who are powerless. Thank you for consistently advocating for basic social and economic changes which will make this a better world for all people. And thank you for being such a positive force in my life.

Carol Brill

1990

The Impact on Social Work Practice of the Social Injustice Content in the NASW Code of Ethics

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*The World as it is Versus the World as it should be*

Steven Daniel Soifer

I first met David Gil during a week-long intensive course on liberation and oppression in January 1980 during my final year of the M.S.W. program at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work in St. Louis, MO. The course was held in between semesters, and it was very popular. David had been teaching it for several years at least, and his reputation had spread far and wide. I knew I really wanted to take it, and I made sure I got in.

While I can't remember much of the course's specific content, I know that it had a profound impact on me. In it, I was first introduced to David's ideas about society and culture, and they were eye-opening. I decided to keep in contact with David after the course (which he encouraged us to do), and this proved to be a fateful decision. Three years later, I was enrolled at the Ph.D. program at the Heller School.

The major reason I went to Heller was so that David could be my mentor. I believed I had a lot to learn from him, which of course turned out to be true. Given all the difficulties at Heller at the time, it was providential that I knew what I wanted to do *before* I got there. Not that I was clear yet about my dissertation—I just was mostly sure about what I wanted to study when I got there.

I can't remember how many courses I took from David. However, I clearly do remember two things: the class style and the syllabus. David's classes were simultaneously "structured" and, to quote Bob Dylan, "free-wheelin." What I mean by this is that we would not only discuss in class many issues related to the themes David brought up, but we also had far-ranging discussions on extremely important topics. On the first day of class, David always gave us a syllabus that included what looked like a 10-year or more reading list. So, we'd ask him what to read, and his response was, "Whatever you want." Complete freedom! And yet it felt very uncomfortable. How do I choose? Will it be enough? What if I choose to not read anything? Could I get away with that? A freedom dilemma, I would call it.

During my first year at Heller, David introduced me to an important group of people in Boston at that time – members of a group called Movement for a New Society (MNS). As I began to attend their meetings and became a member, this network of social activists would become the grounding point for my nonviolent work in Boston, as well as a source of lifelong friends.

When I finally got around to coming up with my dissertation proposal, I started to worry whether I could write 50 or 100 pages, much less a full-length dissertation. David reassured me that many others before me had, and that I would have no problem also doing so. Luckily for me, the IBM personal computer had just come out, and for whatever reason, it freed up my ability to write. As I sat literally in a closet with my IBM, listening to mostly classical music as I wrote, I was able to block out time every day to write and just kept writing and writing and writing. A few years later, and without much fanfare, I finished the dissertation and defended it. And yes, it was more than 100 pages.

In fact, it was 847 pages, and it became the second-longest dissertation in Heller history (the longest one was well over 1,000 pages, and the chair of that one was none other than David).

Dissertation (and book to be) in hand, I began to apply for academic positions and was able to land my dream job at the time—teaching planned social change at the University of Washington, Seattle’s School of Social Work. Again, I kept in touch with David, and whenever I returned to Boston, I would stop in to see David and Eva. Our relationship began to change from mentor–mentee to colleagues to friends. In fact, I actually felt that I was part of David’s “extended family,” and felt a closeness to him and Eva akin to that I would feel toward an uncle and aunt. It probably helped that David, like my mother, was Austrian and Jewish, and our shared background enhanced these feelings of kinship.

As I look back on David’s contributions to my psyche and my work, several things are clearly apparent. First and foremost, David has helped to shape my worldview about how things operate in society. That is fundamental.

Second, David’s clarity on the most important issues and his penchant for asking penetrating questions are his most outstanding characteristics. His ability to get you to think about things, and lead you to certain almost inevitable conclusions, is very Socratic. That twinkle in his eyes when you finally see what he was driving you toward is unforgettable.

Third, David respects differences of opinion, and while he’ll let you know when he disagrees, he makes with you an unspoken agreement to agree to disagree. In fact, as I reflect on it, I can’t remember even once seeing David get angry or agitated about anything, except perhaps the injustices in the world, which he handles in his characteristic level-headed way.

This leads to my fourth point, which is that David is absolutely clear about justice and injustice in the world. I vividly remember once telling David that we should work toward a more just society. He responded that we either have a just society, or we don’t. There is no “more just” society. His vision for how the world should be is crystal clear, and anything in between is unacceptable. No equivocation on his part. No partial justice here. Only actualizing a just world in which everyone can realize his or her full potential will satisfy David.

Finally, David believes that the vision of a just world can only be actualized in a nonviolent way. Violence cannot be condoned. Now, while I’m not sure that David is an absolute nonviolent activist and pacifist (funny, I don’t recall asking him, but that could be my memory playing tricks on me at my age), I do know that David would say that at every moment we can challenge the prevailing worldview through our actions. Of course, the prevailing view includes the hegemonic, almost all-pervasive capitalist view permeating most societies today, even formerly communistic ones.

In conclusion, what I have gotten from David is this: a role model for how things should be, not how things are. David, through his actions and words, exemplifies how he

wants the world to be. He lovingly challenges you and your worldview, skillfully persuading you to see another way of being. He is both a realist and an idealist, recognizing you as the person you are, but holding out a vision of how you can be.

How many people has David influenced? This is certainly hard to know, given all the doctoral dissertations he has chaired, the students that have taken his classes, the books and articles he has written, and the countless other lives he has touched in some way or another. Suffice it to say that the number is in the thousands, and perhaps the tens of thousands, especially if we take into account the multiplier effect. David has led the good life, if by that we mean having a positive and lasting influence on the world. And who could ask for more? Thank you, David, for being the person you are.

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*Unraveling Social Policy: Reflections from the Field*

Erika Kates

There are two kinds of experiences in the graduate-level classroom: the first is where you write notes hurriedly, trying to capture all the lecture's facts in detail; the second is where you sit back and absorb the definitions, values, and goals. David Gil's classes on social policy were of the second type. Our focus was not on the feasible, the affordable, or even the realistic: instead, it was on analyzing why and how our vision of social justice and social policy often is so narrow. Similarly, students can have two kinds of experiences with methodology: now, more than ever, with the quest to excel in quantitative analysis, the discussion likely turns on statistical techniques. In David Gil's classes, the emphasis was on asking the right questions. Third, students can have two experiences with the chairs of their dissertation committees. Often, it is a rite of passage where students experience their professors' lack of accessibility and hypercritical responses. Sometimes the professor is a mentor in the real sense of the word. David Gil again was of the second type: he usually returned my chapter drafts within days of receiving them, and encouraged me to move ahead.

David not only imbued his students with the importance of understanding the roots of social problems, but he also made us think about whose responsibility it was to reveal social injustice and how it should be done. Our role was to address inequality; to illuminate areas of need; to ensure that, regardless of economic standing, race, ethnicity, and gender people are treated with respect; and to highlight the mechanisms by which injustice is perpetuated. Clearly, as analysts and teachers we would have to accept these guidelines. His style was didactic: we understood that we might enlarge upon this point of view, but we could not repudiate it. His classes provided a necessary respite from the ubiquitous pressure to produce "effective players" in the policy arena, and he encouraged us to engage in a thoughtful, analytical, approach. These teachings remain in my memory, together with his soft voice, and the trace of German accent (which, at first I found disquieting since it reminded me of my own family's experiences and the reasons for my own passion for social justice).

David Gil's teachings infused my work in several ways. I became aware of the fact that while we are always searching for and trying to keep up with the latest literature in our field, some books, like *Unraveling Social Policy*, never go out of style and some findings remain undisputed. For example, David Gil pointed out that valid social indicators may be unreliable or unavailable for certain foci (p.66), and astonishingly in this age of data proliferation, this remains true. Researchers frequently list the demographic variables of gender and race/ethnicity separately, making it impossible to learn about the effects of a policy on women of color.

But he also encouraged us to look at the big picture: to explore a policy's origins, reasons for longevity, its long-term effects, and its role in empowering people. The challenge for putting these principles into action has become more apparent to me as I have searched for work in the policy arena, and tried to raise research funds.

My research has always involved low-income women, and one of my priorities in the past twenty years has been how federal and state, welfare, workforce, and education



policies affect low-income mothers' access to postsecondary education. My concern peaked in 1996 with the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which placed the "work first" ideology at the center of welfare and work policies and narrowly restricted educational access.

In one paper I showed how researchers had contributed to the introduction of "work first" through the use of flawed assumptions and methodology, although they used the experimental research model, i.e., the gold standard to show that education did not provide an effective path out of poverty for welfare recipients. In doing so, I argued, they ignored a parallel stream of research, much of which was based on case studies that made a strong case for higher education as a way out of poverty for low-income mothers. In addition, I demonstrated how highly respected policy think tanks then bought into the "work first" culture by defining narrow outcomes for welfare leavers, effectively avoiding the topic of education.

In another paper, I showed the importance of ensuring that policy responses make a significant impact on the problem. A current trend among policymakers and researchers is to highlight "best practices." However, in reviewing some of these studies I argued that they could be viewed as an exercise in exploring how a program adapts to highly flawed policies. Thus, while the trend appears to be a practical response to a restrictive policy climate, it can also perpetuate this climate by implicitly accepting its premises.

Despite the challenges of this work, there have some bright spots. For example, in 1997-2002, I was fortunate to have an office at the Heller School to house an organization I co-founded and directed. We conducted research, outreach and advocacy with the goal of changing Massachusetts welfare policies so women could engage in education to satisfy their work requirement. With the support of a broad coalition of activists, researchers and policy makers, this goal was achieved in 2003. In 2003, I was asked by Congresswoman Patsy Mink to provide testimony on PRWORA's reauthorization, and currently, I am working with a national group of scholars and activists to effect change in the next round of reauthorization debates.

Yet, funding remains a problem. During my time at the Heller School, I had to raise all the research funds, but benefited from an office and my affiliations. As research director at the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston I had to raise only a portion of my research funds, and now as Senior Research Scientist at the Wellesley Centers for Women, again I have to raise all of my research funds. Most funding opportunities are highly circumscribed because they are concerned with legitimizing current policies rather than questioning them; and many prominent 'think tanks' have made hefty profits from this work.<sup>1</sup> Although it is an ongoing struggle, I have found a few, small, progressive foundations that support my work.

Another important lesson is the difference between covert and overt policies, and for me this is still one of the most intriguing facets of policy analysis. Following the change of Massachusetts welfare policies in 2003, I conducted a case study of its implementation. The study compared the participation of a small sample of women of color and immigrants in Boston poorest neighborhoods with statewide data on changes in

women's work participation activities. Not only was there no change among the statewide percentage of welfare recipients' participation in either basic or postsecondary education, but the level of participation among Boston women appeared to be even more problematic than for women in the state as a whole. These results occurred in spite of the fact that more than a dozen top administrators in education, welfare and workforce development agencies claimed to support the policy change permitting education. There seemed to be a clear distinction between the overt and covert policy. I presented the findings with two of the community researchers we trained to an audience of policy makers and state agency heads in 2007, at the State House.

Another lesson I learned well from David Gil was to search for and reveal persistent inequalities. Although the *average* economic and occupational indicators of women in Massachusetts are among the top in the country when compared to other states, I released a policy brief in spring, 2009 revealing the problem of poverty *among* women in Massachusetts. . This inequity, especially women of color and single mothers, was placed within the context of the rapidly growing economic disparities between the top and bottom income groups over the past two decades. By adding information on low-income women's restricted access to higher education, the brief reveals how the growing income disparities both mirror and perpetuate the educational disparities.

Again, the support of the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators, and that of two progressive research and advocacy organizations was critical to the wide release of this policy brief; and it would be impossible to continue to do this work without the support and encouragement of a community of colleagues. It would also be impossible without the kind of foundation that David Gil supplied for his students.

Thank you, David, for the legacy of your work, your persistence, and your humanity.

Erika Kates

1984

Litigation as a Means of Social Change: A Case Study of Women in Prison

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*Discovering My Life's Purpose*

Joyce Avedisian

David, you and my dad, experienced social injustices at a formative age and your life quest was to ask 'why' unnecessary suffering happens and what will it take to prevent the suffering and create justice and peace. (My dad was a child in Turkey when the Turkish massacres of the Armenians took place.) You encouraged me, guided me, and equipped me to pursue my own quest. The consistent theme in my work life has been to alleviate suffering and, if possible, its root causes, and help people and organizations to achieve their God-given potential for good.

Prior to my graduate years at the Heller School, I worked as a research assistant at the Hebrew Rehabilitation Centre for Aged. As a result of providing alternatives to institutionalization for the elderly and disabled, over 50% of people who would otherwise be institutionalized were able to live independently in the community. At the Heller School, thanks in most part to you, I learned about the social and organization underpinnings of social injustice and inequality and the sociology of knowledge. This conceptual foundation along with your ongoing support enabled me to write my dissertation on "Facilitating Organization Change: The Interplay between the Change Problem and the Change Agent's Paradigm." Because I had an understanding of the critical importance of a world view, I knew how world view shaped institutions, behavior, and ultimately societies. I did my dissertation based on a living case study of my work as an Organization Development consultant at New York Telephone Company. As a result of my study and conclusions, the Human Resources department changed their practice paradigm from a highly limiting HR paradigm to a systems paradigm. Prior to my work at New York Telephone, I became the Director of Social Services at the Armenian General Benevolent Union where I designed and provided leadership for a multi-service center for immigrants coming from crisis situations around the world, particularly in the Middle East. I built a model of cooperation and collaboration in which Armenians and other ethnic communities worked together to help each other and the immigrants. The program was highly successful in helping immigrants to get jobs, learn marketable skills, learn English, find homes, and become educated. At the end of 2 years, we were fortunate to get \$2 million in federal funds to expand the services of the center and the number of people we served.

During these years, I was on a spiritual journey which brought me face-to-face with the living God. I saw and experienced God as the source of goodness, love, and authority. My paradigm fundamentally changed as I viewed myself, people, and the world from a Judaic-Christian biblical perspective. My motives changed. Instead of wanting to help to shape institutions from a sociological perspective alone, I wanted to also help influence leaders and shape cultures to reflect biblical perspectives. As a starting point, I chose to work for a global pharmaceutical company in Global Organization Effectiveness because I had the opportunity to learn how to develop a values-driven culture. I focused on working with leadership in the Scandinavian countries to successfully integrate the corporate and regional values, into leadership

behavior, decision-making, and day-to-day activities. Then I saw a need to bridge the turfdoms and unhealthy competition in and across teams, departments, and countries. So I developed and implemented a global knowledge sharing process which focused on sharing and building upon Lessons Learned and Best Practices. The process was effective and when I left the company in 2008, they invited me back as an external consultant to expand and sustain the process throughout the company.

Now I am at a new beginning as I build my consulting company. My vision is to help leaders in small and medium-sized businesses who want to lead by biblical principles, building on my broad experience of designing and shaping organizations and cultures. As I learn experientially, I want to become a thought leader, author, speaker, and educator, in developing a conceptual and practice paradigm for leading from God's perspective. I learned throughout my years, that real change starts with the heart and having a heart like God. I don't have to invent the paradigm. God created the paradigm and my role, and contribution is to continually discover and apply the paradigm and influence others, primarily through who I am, to discover the paradigm and follow God's agenda.

On the surface, my current journey may seem a long way from my journey and work with you David at the Heller School. Yet, I see my journey as consistent. You, David, helped me to ask the right questions such as the root causes of social injustice and inequality. With you as my role model, I am trying to be faithful and persistent in pursuing the answers to those questions. I hope my life is as fruitful as yours in pursuing your life's purpose and caring deeply about and helping others to address the hard questions that can make a difference for people and our world.

Thank-you for being who you are and touching my heart and life in a profound way.

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*Sentiments Towards David Gil*

Ivy George

Professor David Gil was the Chair of my Dissertation committee in the early 1980s. From those early days of regular contact when he mentored me into new ways of approaching social issues to these days when my contact with him is more remote, David remains a forceful presence in my work as a teacher. One outstanding contribution he made in my life was to put me on the path to decolonizing my mind. Critical thought is now the air that I breathe and he has been the catalyst in this life process. I shall never forget the gentle and fearless ways in which he raised questions and in the process moved the very earth one stood on.

I am now a teacher and am always mindful of the power a teacher has to influence the direction of student lives. The forces of domination and control that run through social systems and structures are ever present in my consciousness due to the teaching I received at the hands of Prof. Gil. This is his legacy to me and I try to pass it on to my students. Beyond my teaching, my research and writing is similarly infused with critical thought and so in all these ways I remain in this Great Spirit's debt.

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*Working for Change: Principles in Practice*

Phyllis Glick Kosminsky

I think that what has stayed with me most from all of David's teachings is the idea that the problems we see every day are not mysterious in their origins. We need not shake our heads in confusion as to why people are hungry, homeless, sick. So much of the suffering we see is the result of human action, or inaction. Throughout my life, in one way or another, I've held onto that idea, and it has influenced my work, my relationships, and how I make sense of the world.

When I was still a student at Heller, I began working at a residential institution ("school") for mentally retarded children and adults. My job was to look into the social security benefits available to residents, and so I spent the majority of my time in the records vault, looking at case files. Most of the residents had little or no money, and looking at their case files, I noted that their families had few resources themselves. Also, as I read the case files and looked for explanations as to the cause of peoples' disabilities, I was struck by how many of them were the result of some unidentifiable birth defect. I began to wonder how much of what was unexplainable could in fact be traced to a lack of prenatal care, poor nutrition during pregnancy, and so on. During the years I spent at this institution I worked to apply for benefits for residents, to bring families in to see their children, and to create a human rights committee with participation from the community to address a range of abuses. This was a state institution, and there was tremendous resistance to any kind of change. Frustrating as it was, this experience only validated what I learned as David's student: that many problems persist not because it is impossible to address them, but because we lack the will to do so. Keeping his words and his commitment in mind helped me to anticipate and to meet head on, institutional resistance to change.

Still interested in issues of prenatal health, I went to the Department of Public Health and worked in the Maternal and Child Health unit. Contrary to my expectations, this job proved to be more frustrating than working in the institution, because so much of what I did seemed like bureaucratic busy work. I wrote a lifetime's worth of goal and objective statements and did a lifetime's worth of program evaluations. I continued to try to bring attention to the obvious, such as the fact that only a percentage of women eligible for free prenatal health care actually received it; that at least one reason adolescent girls got pregnant was that they didn't have access to birth control, etc. I became aware of deficiencies in the Department's "pediatric nursing homes", essentially holding places for very sick kids, and wrote an article that was published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

After graduation, I joined the Political Science faculty at Northeastern University, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses on public policy, program development and statistics (to my horror, it was a requirement of the position). I was there for four years, and created a Public Policy concentration within the department, which I chaired. I enjoyed teaching a great deal, but at some point, I began to feel that I was talking about things I had done many years before. I missed working more directly with people and problems. I was ready to do something different.

Meanwhile, on the personal front, my marriage ended. I met a wonderful guy, got married, had a baby boy, and spent the next two years being with him every minute. I decided that I wanted to go back to school and strengthen my clinical skills. I had always had an interest in working with people one on one, but I had been drawn away from psychology by my desire to work for change at a larger level. I became a student again, and earned a degree from Columbia's School of Social Work. I had another baby, a girl, and took a year off from my studies mid-way to be home with her and with my son. (I tried to negotiate some kind of part time arrangement at Columbia so that I could have time with my children, but was told that was not possible. What a world!)

This brings me to the present, or at least, to the work I have been doing for the past twelve years. I work as a therapist, in a not for profit agency and in private practice, counseling people who are bereaved and people with life threatening illnesses, as well as people who are taking care of someone who is dying. I work with adults and with children, one on one and in groups. A lot of the work I do is with people who have experienced a sudden traumatic loss.

In the course of my work with bereaved people, I became aware that many of the people I saw were survivors of early abuse, had grown up in families with an alcoholic parent, or had otherwise suffered some kind of trauma early in life. These early traumas created problems in the resolution of their grief, and so I began to focus more on understanding how trauma in relationship, as well as that which is related to the death, affects bereavement. This work served as the basis of my first book, which deals with complicated forms of grief. I wrote the book to help people understand the reasons why their own grief may be complicated, and as a resource for clinicians. I like to think that it is also a book about both our vulnerability as human beings, and our ability to survive. Working with people who are grieving, I am constantly reminded that we are bound together in so many ways, and beneath the surface, are truly more alike than we are different. It's when we forget that, when we see the differences rather than the fundamental similarities, the shared desires, the common needs, that we're most at risk for failures of compassion.

Throughout many changes of trajectory and purpose in my life, the lessons I learned from David have continued to help me find my way. Although my work now is primarily with individuals, I try to help people beyond those I see in my office, through my writing, and more recently, through a return to teaching. I try to remain conscious of



what matters in my work and in my life. I try to put into practice the commitment to justice and equality, in society and in relationships, that was the deepest lesson I received at Heller. As a role model, as a mentor, as a friend, I will always be grateful to David Gil for helping me find a path with meaning.

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*Unraveling Education Policy: Changing Rules when a Change in Values is Needed*

Nancy Aries

How do you create social equity when the politics and social structure is aligned against equity? The dilemma is so clearly played out at City University of New York (CUNY); a university that attempts to provide a quality education with resources that is a fraction of those of elite private universities. While these numbers are only roughly comparable, Brandeis' 2008-09 budget, excluding external research and endowment support was approximately \$141 million dollars.<sup>1</sup> Brandeis enrolled 5,327 students last year.<sup>1</sup> That makes a per capita spending of approximately \$26,450 per student. CUNY's budget including endowment spending but excluding research was \$2.365 billion dollars and CUNY enrolled almost a quarter of a million students (232,114).<sup>1</sup> Using full-time equivalence to make the number more analogous to Brandeis', CUNY enrolled 178,179.<sup>1</sup> CUNY spent \$13, 273 for each full-time equivalent student. That is about half of what Brandeis spends.

When I first arrived at Baruch College, one of CUNY's 23 colleges as a freshly minted Heller Ph.D., numbers like these had no meaning to me. Everything seemed possible. At that time I understood the proud history of this public university system. City College claims the most Nobel laureates graduating from a public university. I also understood the pride taken in extending those educational opportunities through the hard fought decision to establish open admissions. CUNY was a school that promised students the chance to realize the American dream.

My instinctive solution was to work small. I could influence that part of the University where I was engaged. Initially it was a MBA program in Health Care Administration that was run jointly with The Mount Sinai School of Medicine. We never had more than 100 students in the program. This was a fraction of a percent of the total CUNY enrollment. But we could proudly claim that the graduates from our program were CEOs, COOs, and VPs at major hospitals throughout the metropolitan area. We accomplished this in myriad ways that mimicked what occurred at the top business schools. At that time our program had federal support for graduate assistantships. This meant our students could enroll on a full-time basis. We were also able to draw upon the resources of The Mount Sinai Medical Center. Their senior administrators partnered with our faculty to teach classes that found a good balance between theory and practice. There was a required three month internships in the executive offices of health care institutions throughout the region that gave students a valuable perspective on the running of an institution from 30,000 feet. Through these mentorships and an active alumni association, there was a network of persons who were available to counsel and advocate for our students of a range of career related issues. In contemporary language, "we leveraged our resources."

Times changed and I found myself in the School of Public Affairs overseeing academic programs for 1,000 students. Again, we were able to create an intense academic and social support network for our students that drew upon external resources and persons working in public and nonprofit organizations around the City. We were able to offset some of the limitations of a part-time, commuter school through the creation of

programs like Public Affairs Week where we redirected classes for one week each year so students could attend major policy talks to which they might not otherwise avail themselves. We were proud to host Corey Booker and Wilbur Rich on education policy and Bruce Vladeck and Gail Wilensky on health care reform.

Despite these successes, the dilemma I posed at the beginning of this festschrift about the challenges of providing a comparable service with half the possible resources is at the heart of David Gil's work. As a field of scholarship, social policy has always traversed a path between two lodestars; system reform and system regeneration<sup>1</sup>. To choose to engage with society as a scholar or activist in the social policy arena, if one is intellectually honest, mean navigating your own path between them. Can reform really make a difference? Is social regeneration nothing more than a comforting illusion? The Heller School boasts a stellar roster of teachers of system reform, all of whom are worthy of honors for their contributions. But there is no doubt in my mind that Heller would not have the intellectual heart and soul to be the school that it has been without Professor David Gil. For four decades David provided Heller students and the broader academic world with a vision that points steadily and unflinching upon the urgent need for system regeneration. The intellectual life of the Heller School would be bereft without his important voice.

David is soft spoken but his words about what I call system regeneration or what he might refer to as a world shaped by values of social equity and social justice had a powerful influence on me and on the many students with whom he came in contact over these years at the Heller School. Two memories about his words are important to tell. There is the memory of my first semester in graduate school reading *Unraveling Social Policy*. David provided a model for understanding this broad field that we call social policy. What he presented was the large picture – social policy from 30,000 feet. He made it clear that no policy can be taken out of its larger social context. Policy does not perform independently. It is an outcome of previous social policies and exists within a comprehensive social system. While ostensibly a book about policy analysis, it was a book about change. David provided a devastating critique of system reform. He argued that meaningful change can only take place when significant transformations occur within the larger social system that determined the options for how we address individual well-being, social well-being, and what we now refer to as global well-being. *Unraveling Social Policy* gave me a clear-cut vision of what would happen in the best of all possible worlds. His is a concept of policy that assumed social justice could prevail. To read the book was to think that one didn't have to accept less in the world.

The second memory I want to share is about the ways David lived the words he had so carefully constructed in his book. David has a tremendous sense of principle and he does not act in ways that compromise his principles. This sense of principle was brought home to me when I heard him asked to sign a letter that was being forwarded to some Congressional committee regarding continuation funding for an OEO project in Cambridge. David's response was simple, "Why would I do that? I don't believe in Congress. Sending them petitions just encourages their bad behavior." David's decision not to be involved in this small demonstration of political will reflected his belief that

without taking on the larger issues, the only result would be one that would compromise the social justice about which he so passionately cares.

Neither in words or action does David compromise his beliefs about system regeneration. I have made decisions that were very different from David's in the ways that I have led my professional life, but they are decisions that were influenced by David. I have chosen to work within a bureaucratic system in which many of my colleagues strive to create social justice and yet we find ourselves compromising at every step along the way. I believe that social justice will result from sweeping social change, but I find myself fighting for the small changes that will improve the chances for a small group of people.

I'm now working at the system level as the University Dean for Undergraduate Education. It's no longer the case of providing a minute fraction of the students with a high quality education. It is a question of providing a comparable education to the other 99.9% of the students who are as entitled to the quality education that is provided through niche programs like those that I directed. I want all of the students to have the attention that I could provide when I was responsible for only a small subset of them. My challenge is to help set policy to ensure that our public university provides a first rate education for all the residents of New York City.

The values and debates that guide me are the social policy debates of reform and regeneration that defined my time as a Heller student. Many of us arrived at Heller having been able to make change on a small scale for the persons who came into contact with the programs or agencies we ran before heading back to graduate school. We left Heller with that same notion about our abilities to effect change. Incrementalism was not a perfect solution but it would allow us to muddle through. As long as the trajectory was in the right direction, the strategy seemed well chosen. David's work challenged each of us to reconsider the strategic choice and reconsider its limitations. As a university dean I realize that effectiveness cannot be achieved without raising the more systemic questions that are in David's realm. To make a quality education available to all New Yorkers requires a world committed to the values of social justice that David so ardently advocates and acts upon. Having been able to separate an incrementalist view from one that professes regeneration, I now find myself coming up against the limits of that separation in my work.

CUNY is working on a number of initiatives that are directed at improving the educational experience of its undergraduates. CUNY is also developing an even greater number of niche programs that will provide students with opportunities that are similar to those at a private university like Brandeis. In David's framework, these are small reforms that will make the limited resources of the university go further and improve the chances that a larger number of students succeed. But fundamentally, it is a public system that cannot compete given the basic distribution of educational resources in this country. I do

not have David's strength of character to say "Why would I do that? I don't believe in Congress. Sending them petitions just encourages their bad behavior." Indeed I very much need to encourage them to do the right thing where possible but always knowing it will be merely a small change, a niche, within a social system that is not yet guided by the larger values of equity that David's scholarship and character so vigorously embodies.

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*Working for a Passionate and Just Society*

Catherine Nichols

I grew up in a family that always held promoting social justice as a high value and personal obligation. With my parents working in the fields of public health and social work, conversation often swirled around the topic of social welfare. When I was looking for graduate schools, the Heller School came up immediately as one of the few locations where these concerns would be valued and studied. At Heller, my first day of orientation when I met David Gil, I knew that my expectations would be met. From his book, *Unraveling Social Policy: Theory, Analysis, and Political Action Toward Social Equality*, which my mother used as a text in her community organizing classes, to the titles of his courses I took in my first semester, “The Social Context of Social Policy” and “Violence in Everyday Life”, my Heller experience was entirely shaped by my concentration in Social Change and the profound academic and theoretical support that I received from David Gil.

When I arrived at the Heller School fall of 1995, I had just left heated debates in Arizona about the state of the uninsured. Arizona was facing a serious crisis, with over ¼ of the population without medical insurance. I arrived at Heller and experienced a rough adjustment to academic life. My energy and community efforts were still focused in Arizona with our desperate cases of people facing financial ruin and serious untreated illness due to a lack of health care. While I loved the luxury of coursework focused on theory, the second that the spring semester ended, I rushed to work in Arizona to carry petitions, talk to voters and push forward with a ballot initiative.

Returning to Heller in the fall, I shared with David our efforts at participatory democracy and our endeavor to present healthcare as an obligation of Arizona to its citizens. He encouraged me to widen my perspective and consider healthcare an inalienable human right. His constant reminder that understanding the structural roots of the lack of healthcare was fundamental to developing a social policy that truly supported individual development -- this was the challenge I had hoped to receive from graduate school. I was working with a professor who could hold the “realpolitik” at a distance and encourage me to deeply think about true progressive social policy. The initiative, through hard work and complicated coalition building, passed overwhelmingly with 72.8% of the vote. It was wonderful to share the results the next morning in our Social Welfare seminar with fellow students and listen to David broach a discussion that both validated the process of this community-based social change while never abandoning the theoretical underpinnings of wider social welfare and the resulting critique of a society that left so many uninsured and bereft.

Coursework with David brought together some of the most diverse students I have ever met in my academic life. In our advising group, often there were doctoral candidates who had chosen untraditional thesis topics, who held visions for community wholeness, and whose proposals did not fit any particular mold. David has maintained a critical role throughout his tenure at the Heller School with his openness to dissertations that grew out of learned experience. When I finished my coursework at Heller, I returned to work on my thesis in Arizona. However, the legislature had still refused to implement

the initiative from three years earlier and 26% of the state was still uninsured, close to 1.2 million people. I became the co-coordinator for a second citizen initiative on the 2000 ballot. We mandated the change of eligibility and required that the state designate the tobacco litigation settlement funds to pay for the increase. I would check in with David about the slow progress of my dissertation, only to receive affirmation that what I was working on above, beyond and around the dissertation was of equal or greater value and would eventually contribute to a better dissertation.

He was correct. I strongly believe this community-based knowledge was indispensable for my thesis and made it structurally meaningful. This initiative both won the election and received votes to supersede a competing initiative as well. My experience was pivotal in reinforcing a tangible understanding of how a small cadre of caring individuals can create meaningful change with commitment and persistence. David's support throughout was unwavering and at the end of the process, he encouraged me to share my work with the wider Heller community. At Heller, I grew to share his belief that the sharing of these experiences of transforming communities is critical to our growth as a human society. A commitment to listen and learn from others was a treasured lesson modeled by David's leadership both in the colloquia and the classroom.

The more that I wrote, the more I appreciated David's thoughtful reading and critique of every page and I was astounded at his ability to question the concepts that were often accepted in wider academia. I completed the joint master's program in Women's Studies and asked that he read my thesis on the impact of the "Welfare to Work Act" in Arizona. There was no other professor who asked me to think about the entire structure of the welfare system and its deficiencies like David. He had so many insights but I want to share two that, again, I believe are representative of his thought-provoking approach:

*One comment concerns language: You are using the term, "the poor," rather than "poor people." Using the adjective poor as a noun implies that poverty inheres in individuals rather than in the social system*

*...A final comment concerns the policy implications of your welfare study. I think you may want to suggest that a real solution to welfare and work issues is the elimination of poverty and of forced labor. We know how to do this, but we lack the political commitment. Part of moving in that direction is acknowledging it clearly whenever possible and putting it on the public agenda.*

While working on my dissertation continued, it was not quick and the commitment to social change was often stronger. Shortly after the health care initiative, I found a job in Jerusalem working on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. David again both continued to support my work on my thesis and to assist me in addressing the root causes of the conflict and to share his personal efforts to create real communication between Israelis and Palestinians. In my work there, he was both supportive and understanding of the personal cost of working in an environment as violent and charged as the second Intifada became. In one of the days where I was faced with a particularly challenging dynamic, he sent me his own analysis of terrorism:



*Military might can not eliminate the root causes and dynamics of terrorism. It may even intensify the vicious cycles of violence and terrorist counter violence. Elimination of the causes of terrorism seems to require thorough transformations of global political and economic institutions in ways conducive to human development by assuring the fulfillment of people's needs everywhere.*

While he never let my work in social change become an excuse for not completing my dissertation, he also maintained respect for the efforts in social change that I was making as fruitless as they often seemed. In his ability to find value in my work, I was able to move forward with my dissertation. With his guidance, I was able to perceive and continue with both projects not as contradictory pulls but rather as mutually encouraging learning experiences.

(On a personal note, I was deeply distressed when I received news of David's fall from a rooftop in November 2005. It was only when I received the following note, together with the other advisees, from the administration just two weeks later that I knew his own diligence to scholarship had not been affected: David called yesterday and asked me to pass on the following message to you. He wants to make sure you know that he will continue working during his rehabilitation and that you should send him any written dissertation work that needs feedback.)

At the end stage of my dissertation, I took a sabbatical from work to finish my degree. I wrestled with the question of direct democracy as a critical factor in our U.S. electoral process. David never let this go easily. With his careful feedback, he was able to help me catch assumptions that I did not even know that I was making. The following footnote in my opening chapter is an example of the impact of a simple question that David raised:

*The terms "America" and "American" appear in this dissertation because of common usage. The author recognizes that these are misnomers. The United States of America is merely one section of the North American continent, and to reference "America" is actually to indicate a much larger geographical region.*

Throughout my tenure at the Heller School, David has never disappointed me with his acute capacity to pull theoretical analysis into simple conversations and challenge the prevailing status quo. I want to close with a recent email exchange this spring about a potential closure of the School of Social Work in Tucson due to state budget cuts that we were fighting tooth and nail (and we won!), David replied with this comment:

*All these are symptoms of an insane culture. Everyone and every institution are trying to save their own neck without changing a system that inevitably produces crises. Few people advocate focusing on the roots of our ills by transforming our selfish-competitive ways of life into community-affirming, cooperative, socially just alternatives. President Obama seems to follow Roosevelt's model of saving capitalism, rather than transcending it.*

From the first day at the Florence Heller School to my last evening after my defense where I had dinner with David and his wonderful wife Eva, I have felt that his compassion and his authenticity epitomized the unique nature of the Heller School. Thanks to his guidance and leadership, I enter the workplace with the goal of creating change in immobile, volatile or desperate situations with humanizing strategies. Although all social change work takes years to see results, and often runs into serious hurdles that prohibit measurable success, I deeply appreciate the opportunity that David has created for all Heller students to create a more compassionate and just society and I hope that we can all retain a degree of his vision in our future work

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1981

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*Universal Free School Meals: A Simple Recipe for Fixing School Food*

Janet Poppendieck

I remember many of the conversations I have had with David Gil over the years, but perhaps the one that is lodged most clearly in my mind is a brief comment Dave made when I told him that I was pregnant. “It is a good thing for policy analysts and advocates to have children,” he told me, “because what you want for your own children is what you want for all the children.” It became my rule of thumb: what would I want for Amanda? And what will I want for my grandchildren when the time comes? What I want for all our children now, after spending the past six years studying school food programs, is tasty, healthy food at school, prepared by workers who are respected, trained, adequately equipped, and justly compensated, from foods that are fresh, wholesome and sustainably and humanely produced. I want meals that are regarded as an important part of the school day, integrated with the curriculum and designed to teach healthy eating and care of the environment. And I want meals that promote positive interaction and solidarity among students and between students and teachers. And finally, I want these meals served without charge to all our children, not sold to some and given to others in a demeaning and stigmatizing means tested system.

Pie in the sky? No. That is another thing that Dave Gil taught me: to speak my truth, even if it seems unattainable or makes people uncomfortable. Don’t compromise in advance. There will be plenty of detractors and nay-sayers to argue that this is a nice idea that we can not afford, or to accuse me of “utopian” thinking. (In the classroom, David had a habit of stopping to explore the meaning and context of a word; in that spirit, I might ask, how did “utopian” become a negative label, anyway?) Our job is to articulate the vision and work for it, not to do the opposition’s work for them. Dave has set the standard with his uncompromising demand for a just and violence-free society and an economic system designed to meet human needs—and in his persistent conviction that such a world is possible.

In fact, the sort of school food that I want, that our children need, is far from unattainable. Most of the elements of my alternative vision are in place and working somewhere in the U.S. as I write. Healthy, tasty food? Take a look at what is going on at the Abernathy Elementary School in Portland where chef and parent Linda Colwell has undertaken a project to bring fresh, scratch cooking back to the school kitchen, using local foods and even items grown by the children in the school’s garden as often as possible. Look at the diverse and healthy cuisine chef Ann Cooper has brought to the Berkeley CA school system, or the salad bars instituted by Tracie Thomas at schools in impoverished, inner city Compton, CA. And this is not just a west coast phenomenon. Look at what Food Service Director Doug Davis manages to do in Burlington, Vermont: each time a new, healthy recipe is introduced (Butternut squash cookies, anyone?), the fifth graders survey their schoolmates to assess the response. Vegetables and fruits, you may say, are the easy part; a few local apples and carrots won’t change the nature of school food. Then look at the pilot program the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has developed to bring pasture raised, grass fed beef to the public schools.

If you are familiar with the black box model of school food, in which the cafeteria is seen as an interruption in instruction—children file in and emerge 20 minutes later “fueled” by foods that are of no interest or concern to the principal and faculty, then take a look at the experiments all across the country that involve children in growing and preparing food. In Davenport, CA, lunch is prepared by the 5<sup>th</sup> graders organized into teams, one for each day of the week, and served while the school food service director, a certified music educator, plays classical music on the sound system. The tables on the schools’ sunny cafeteria porch are decorated by the fourth graders with flowers from the school’s garden. Wonderful lesson plans based on growing and cooking food have been created by food educator Antonia Demas, by “Cookshop” in New York City and Cooking with Kids in Santa Fe New Mexico, and a full scale science curriculum based on food has been developed by a team at Teachers College, Columbia. The Edible Schoolyards established by Alice Waters in Berkeley, CA and New Orleans, LA have developed lessons in the arts and humanities as well as the life sciences. In the great tradition of John Dewey, whose famous laboratory schools regularly engaged students in cooking, eating becomes both a conscious act and an opportunity for exploration of the world. Lunch and learning go hand in hand.

In another sense, of course, lunch and learning have always gone together. “If a student has a cola and a bag of chips for lunch,” a long term nutrition activist told me, “that *is* her nutrition education for the day.” All meals teach lessons, but some teach precisely the lessons that we don’t want our children to learn. Foods sold outside (and in competition with) the federally subsidized meals are not subject to the same nutrition requirements. Schools littered with vending machines dispensing salty fried snacks and high fat, high sugar pastries teach lessons. Schools with *a la carte* lines selling nachos with “cheeze” sauce and endless quantities of french fries teach lessons. We need our schools to teach the pleasure of fresh, whole foods and the importance of eating for wellness.

Health and nutrition, however, are not the only lessons we need. I want meals that teach respect for the farmer and the cook, for the environment and classmates. Lunch needs to be served and consumed in ways that discourage waste instead of promoting it. After all, that food represents not only nature’s gifts of sun, soil and water but also the effort and skill of farmers and food service workers all along the food chain. That is why I believe that time for lunch, a relaxed and sociable environment, must replace the frenzied fast food scene typical in so many school cafeterias. There are logistical challenges, of course; the short lunch period is often a response to the need to accommodate very large numbers of students in sequenced periods, but creative principals have figured out ways to relieve the crowding in the cafeteria. We need more schools to create special interest groupings and spaces—lunch in the lab for science enthusiasts, lunch in the library for book lovers, picnic boxes for outdoor eating. Fortunately, the success of breakfast in the classroom programs has gone a long way toward dispelling the fears of schools overrun with rodents that have hindered such solutions in the past.

None of these innovations will fully solve the problems plaguing our school lunch programs, however, until we address the stigmatizing and administratively burdensome

means test currently at the heart of the program. Children from families with incomes under 130% of the poverty line [and children who are categorically eligible because of participation in another program such as SNAP] are eligible for free meals. Children from families with incomes between 130 % and 185% of the federal poverty line are eligible for reduced price meals—typically 40 cent lunches and 30 cent breakfasts. Children from families with higher incomes purchase their meals at prices set locally, commonly referred to as “full price,” even though they, too, receive a subsidy from the federal government—usually around \$.40 per meal in a combination of cash and commodities. For administrators, this system is a nightmare. Applications have to be distributed and collected, and a percentage of such applications have to be verified; then, *each meal* must be accounted for as a free, reduced price or full price meal. Errors are frequent, and food program administrators live in fear that reimbursements will be withheld if errors are discovered.

Even where there are few errors, the three-tier system falls far short of meeting the needs of our children. Schools are not set up to conduct means tests, and the law does not provide for the sorts of adjustments to income—deductions and exclusions—with which welfare administrators are familiar. Thus the system lacks the capacity to respond to any unusual individual circumstances or to differences in cost of living around the nation. If you miss the eligibility for reduced price meals by five dollars, you lose out on a benefit worth hundreds of dollars annually, per child. And for families with several children in school, even the reduced price meal, certainly a bargain may not be affordable. Cafeteria managers report that participation by children in the reduced price category falls off sharply toward the end of the month, and drops when a raise pushes a formerly free family into the reduced price category.

More troubling is the effect of this classification on children. Cafeteria staff tells me that the younger children are not bothered—they gleefully shout out “I’m free”—but as youngsters approach middle school and the adolescent preoccupation with differentiation and popularity, lunch status becomes a marker. Somehow, “everybody knows” who is eating free. Some eligible students forego the meal rather than be labeled, and others eat a meal seasoned with shame. In the years that I studied with David Gil, he sensitized me to a broader and more inclusive definition of violence than the one with which I arrived at Heller as a 1960s peace activist, and to me, such stigma is a form of violence against children.

The stigma situation is greatly intensified by the sale of a la carte items, (a practice to be found in nine out of ten of the nation’s secondary schools). In many cafeterias, affluent students line up at the a la carte window where their favorite food choices are not constrained by federal nutrition standards, and fairly quickly the word gets out that the subsidized, nutritionally regulated meals are “only for the poor kids.” Then, in a classic display of the self-fulfilling prophecy, affluent students will avoid the regular line for fear that someone might think they are getting a free meal.

Computer technology has offered what many see as a solution in the form of pre-paid lunch accounts and point of sale or POS swipe cards, so that no cash changes hands in the cafeteria. Like many technological solutions to what are basically problems of human social interaction, however, the POS approach has generated a whole new round

of troubles. When a student with a pre-paid account reaches the cashier with a tray full of food, and the computer shows that the account is exhausted, the cashier is required to confiscate the tray. She can not return the food to the line after the child has touched it, so in too many instances, she dumps the tray. During the time that I spent researching school food programs, accounts of such incidents appeared in newspapers all over the country, and then made their way to my desktop via a Google alert. Many school systems have instituted a policy of providing such children with an alternate lunch, widely referred to as “stigma sandwiches,” to drive home the message that parents must replenish the account. Again the presence of a la carte items intensifies the problem; the child’s account may be out of money because a parent failed to send in a new monthly payment, but it may be out of money because the youngster has been treating herself or her friends to candy bars and sports drinks, drawing down the account more rapidly than parents anticipated. Food Service Directors across the country told me that “low balance” accounts were rapidly becoming their biggest headache.

Given the pernicious effects of al la carte sales of “competitive foods,” you may be wondering why they exist. The simple answer is money. In the early 1980s, the Reagan administration sharply reduced subsidies for school meals at just the time that school systems, faced with enrollment declines, mounting pension and benefit costs, and reduced federal funding, began demanding that school food programs “break even” and “operate like a business.” The sharp reduction in the subsidy for “full price” meals resulted in sudden meal price increases, and a massive loss of full price customers—nearly a quarter of full price students dropped out of the program in the two years after the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981. Schools across the country instituted or increased a la carte sales in an effort to make ends meet, and also as a way to lure those “full price” customers back into the cafeteria.

The time has come for universal free school meals; students are required to go to school. We should feed them healthy meals whenever they are there at mealtimes. Such meals should be free for all as a matter of right. Dave Gil’s emphasis on policies that create rights has been a cornerstone for my social policy work. We need to fund these meals through progressive taxation, not through parental fees. Under a universal system, adequately funded, there would be no need to sell unhealthy competitive foods. Freed from the need to compete with these massively advertised fast food clones, school cafeterias could return to serving wholesome fresh foods. There would be no need for cashiers and expensive point of sale systems. There would be no errors of assigning meals to the wrong category. Staff time freed from the administrative nightmare of the three-tier reimbursement system could be redirected into the preparation of fresh, appetizing and instructive meals for all students and staff. With meals offered free, consuming them would quickly become the norm. There would be no stigma attached to eating in the lunchroom, and no stratification of students by ability to pay. Students and faculty could sit down together to share the pleasure of wholesome food. This is what I wanted for my own child when she was in school, and it is what I want for all our children now.

One of the skills that David Gil encouraged when I was his student was systemic thinking, and it is worth considering what such a change in our school food programs



might mean for the larger food system and the natural world in which it is embedded. With universal free school meals, politically adept middle income and affluent parents would develop a greater stake in the quality of school food, and would bring their considerable political clout to efforts to insure adequate funding. Further, universal free meals would increase the total meal volume and thus the availability of school food jobs. These are jobs on the school calendar, and as such, highly compatible with child rearing. With better, healthier food, more affluent participants, and greater integration of the cafeteria with the curriculum, school food workers can finally receive the respect they deserve, and students can learn a greater appreciation for food preparation skills. Finally, with universal free school meals, the potential of school food to promote a healthier environment will be magnified. I have done a great deal of public speaking since *Sweet Charity?* was published in the late 1990s, and as the new book, *Free for All: Fixing School Food in America* goes to press, I have begun speaking about school meals. I often ask audiences if they have consciously tried, in the past few years, to change their own eating habits in ways that will benefit the ecosystem. People tell me that they have begun to make more use of organic produce in order to spare the land and waterways the toxic burden of chemical fertilizers and pesticides or that they are buying more locally and regionally produced food in order to reduce the carbon footprint occasioned by transportation or that they are eating less meat or choosing pasture raised meats in order to reduce the impact of Confined Animal Feeding Operations. If you eat three meals a day and never skip one, you are responsible for 1065 meals per year. It is easy to think that your behavior makes little difference. But what if you were responsible for 7 billion meals per year—the number currently served by the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs—or the 10 billion or so meals that I estimate would be served if we moved to a universal free program? With procurement and processing on that scale, we really could make a difference in our food system—in the markets available to producers of sustainably grown and humanely raised foods—and thus in the ability of farmers to make the choices that are healthy for the ecosystem. And this too is what I want for my own child, and for all our children. I believe that we can harness the universal desire of parents for the health and well-being of their children to bring about these changes, and I can think of no better place to begin than with school food.

Janet Poppendieck

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Breadlines Knee Deep in Wheat: the Initiation of Federal Domestic Food Assistance

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