This chapter discusses methods to link experiences caseworkers report in their work groups to observable outcomes in the children whose care they manage. It uses multiple-level and longitudinal techniques to demonstrate that children served by caseworkers in agencies with better work climates, where caseworkers are more engaged in their work settings, show better psychosocial functioning over time than children served by agencies with worse work climates, where caseworkers report much lower engagement in their work settings. The message is that intervention at the agency level may well produce better outcomes for the individual child.

This chapter examines research on the effectiveness of casework: the main approach used by child welfare social workers to serve their clients. Topics discussed include the modern caseworker, professional constraints to casework effectiveness, assessing the effectiveness of casework, family preservation services, the long-term impact of foster care, and research on child development.
Popularizing Protection
David R. Ambaras

in Bad Youth: Juvenile Delinquency and the Politics of Everyday Life in Modern Japan

Published in print: 2005 Published Online: May 2012
Publisher: University of California Press
DOI: 10.1525/california/9780520245792.003.0005
Item type: chapter

This chapter discusses the expansion of juvenile-protection programs from 1918 to the mid-1930s, during which period Japan experienced the rise and collapse of the “Taishō Democracy.” It first describes the spread of social policy, which was meant to stabilize the lives of the poor, and then introduces the juvenile court, where referrals from procurators could be received. The chapter also considers the approaches used by caseworkers to treat delinquent or at-risk youths, and the challenges posed by custodial treatment.

Playing Case Manager
Lauren J. Silver

in System Kids: Adolescent Mothers and the Politics of Regulation

Published in print: 2015 Published Online: January 2016
Publisher: University of North Carolina Press
DOI: 10.5149/northcarolina/9781469622590.003.0002
Item type: chapter

This chapter describes the inequalities between program settings, including Supervised Independent Living (SIL) apartment sites, the SIL administrative office, and the private agency’s business office. Case managers often feel discounted by administrative supervisors, if they don’t feel appreciated in their positions. As such, they are unable to provide comprehensive care to their clients. A general inability to sustain long-lasting and meaningful relationships also hinder care. However, identifying “caring” caseworkers and getting rid of the “uncaring” ones would not improve service provision overall. SIL environments have shaped interactions in ways that have compromised concern, irrespective of any individual worker’s intentions, suggesting that an individualized approach to care will not address the effects of structural inequalities and stigma narratives. Fragmentation within and between bureaucracies compromise the kind acts of participants and limit effective service provision.
“The Way They Treat You Is Inhumane”
Judith A. Levine

in Ain't No Trust: "How Bosses, Boyfriends, and Bureaucrats Fail Low-Income Mothers and Why It Matters"

Published in print: 2013 Published Online: September 2016

This chapter focuses on women's interactions with caseworkers in the welfare office. It is through caseworkers that women learn welfare rules and access welfare benefits. The nature of a woman's relationship with her caseworker determines in part her understanding of welfare rules and whether she believes they will be followed reliably. Most women interviewed for this study described caseworkers who paid inadequate attention to their needs and treated them with hostility. As a result of these difficult interactions, many women in both time periods either did not know official welfare rules or suspected that caseworkers honored only the rules that were not in a recipient's favor. Both the lack of communication of welfare rules and the distrust that they would be properly implemented undermined voluntary incentives designed to entice recipients into the labor market. Distrust thus inhibited women's positive response to voluntary incentives.

Almost Not an Organisation
in Families and Social Workers: The Work of Family Service Units 1940–1985

Published in print: 2000 Published Online: June 2013

This chapter presents a discussion on the shape of Family Service Units (FSU). Some of the structural confusion of FSU may have been due to its rapid growth. Structural conditions may also have been intensified by the genesis of FSU as an organisation that began in two provincial branches, but which planned an administrative structure with a metropolitan centre. In the late 1960s, severe problems between caseworkers and their unit organisers arose in Liverpool and Newcastle. The problems of FSU in developing effective management were common to much of the voluntary sector. Moreover, FSU had a legacy of managerial relationships that trapped the organisation in introspection and a constant rearrangement of furniture without thoroughly re-ordering the house.
The Man with the Repulsive Face

This chapter examines the social work of the Charity Organization Society in London, focusing on the cause of a man with a repulsive face who was denied assistance for the treatment of his facial rashes. It suggests that this case established how different the welfare applicants were from the charity visitors who heard their stories and tried to evaluate their problems. This chapter also highlights caseworkers' negative descriptions of the poor and even sometimes with a sense of almost ironic detachment.

They Are Somewhere Down the Stairs

This chapter comments on the approaches and methods of the Charity Organization Society (CSO) social workers in London. It suggests that the London caseworkers lacked the rigor and forceful and optimistic determinations of their counterparts in Melbourne, Boston, and Minneapolis. These COS caseworkers were simply more detached to the poor, had less interest in pursuing and questioning the poor, and were less determined in making progress.

Little People

This chapter examines the work of Charity Organization Society social workers with the so-called “helpable” category of poor in London. It explains that charity exchanges with this category were often characterized by humiliation and gratitude. This chapter discusses the
tendency of caseworkers to describe the helpable poor as being little, with disorganized bodies, repulsive blemishes, and misshapen features.

Dense and Low Grade, but Still He Builds Great Castles in the Air

in Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse: Social Work and the Story of Poverty in America, Australia, and Britain

Published in print: 2011 Published Online: March 2013


This chapter examines the works of Charity Organization Society social workers with the so-called “unhelpable” category of poor in London. It explains that the poor in this category appeared to be often ungrateful and overly demanding and COS caseworkers were often disdainful and dismissive in dealing with them. This chapter also mentions that charity exchanges in this category bordered on the aggressive and COS visitors often made it a point of discrediting and demolishing their fanciful aspirations.