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GAIN's loss is an unheard voice

Lorene Virginia Lozano
Lori Ann Richard

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GAIN'S LOSS IS AN UNHEARD VOICE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Lorene Virginia Lozano and Lori Ann Richard
June 1994
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Approved by:

Dr. Teresa Morris, Project Advisor, Social Work
Non-Agency Based Program

Dr. Teresa Morris, Chair of Research Sequence
ABSTRACT

This project was intended to fill a conspicuous gap in past studies of Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN), California's workfare program. Attention has been focused on how GAIN has had an impact on female clients. The researchers used a post-positivist feminist critical perspective for research methodology that we believe would finally enable women to be heard. Data was gathered by conducting in-depth interviews of past and present female GAIN participants. Tabulation of the data was conducted through established coding methods. Social work practice goals were served by empowering the vulnerable population of female GAIN participants and provided an impetus for social change.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We offer our sincerest gratitude to Jack “a thesaurus” Nelson for his diligence, patience, and adeptness in handling our periodic moments of hysteria, frustration, conditions of brain death, and our endeavors at lucidity. Thank you for pulling us back into reality and keeping us grounded in theory. We share our success in this project equally with you.

We would also like to acknowledge Dr. Teresa Morris, Assistant Professor at California State University, San Bernardino, Department of Social Work. Your perseverance recharged our resolve at our darkest moments; your enthusiasm for professionalism was our motivational factor. We offer our sincerest thanks for your emphatic steadfastness to the very end. Periodically, our sleep will be disrupted with our battle cry of, “Rewrite it again? O.K., Fine.”
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Whether we view welfare reform as a means for helping people free themselves from the welfare system, and become self-sufficient as a ploy for politicians to keep tax payers content, (i.e., 'we ARE doing something about welfare'), as a way for business to enlarge the labor pool, as a means of investing in the nation's future work-force, or in other ways, the soon to be implemented, mandated Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program will vitally affect a group of families now on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), primarily mothers and their children who are already disadvantaged and vulnerable (Ozawa & Brown, 1989, p. 47).

INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years America has changed its focus from "...alleviating poverty to alleviating dependency" (O'Donnell 1993). Moneys for social programs have been cut drastically. Thus, funds for such endeavors must be used in the most efficient, yet comprehensive manner. It appears that poverty has traditionally been inflicted upon women and to further victimize them, their voice has been blatantly omitted. Feminists believe that, "Poor women can speak for themselves," (Withorn and Lefkowitz 1988) since, only women, intimately know their own needs and hardships. Social Work, as a profession, values the empowerment of vulnerable clients through constructive change by providing self-determination and real opportunities. Additionally, as implied by the Social Work Code of Ethics, respecting each client's individual independence and dignity must be upheld. For the last decade, welfare policy has been exclusively in the hands of the "experts" who are composed largely of men (O'Donnell 1993). These policies seem to have less concern for women's economic and social well-being than have concern regarding the expense to the taxpayer (Withorn and Lefkowitz 1988). The intent of this
project is to empower women of poverty by giving them a voice as to their perceptions in how their lives are affected by current policy and by giving them the opportunity to suggest changes in the construction of more appropriate workfare programs.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND FOCUS

Historically, work and welfare have been used in combination since the workhouse days of the Elizabethan period. Social activists presumed that workhouses were institutions of proper punishment for the able bodied poor. This was known as indoor relief, that is, care of the poor was provided in the homes of others or in institutions (Axinn & Levin 1992; Rosenblatt 1988). "Care" meant indentured servitude as Colonial America transitioned from an English system of security that included work and assistance (Axinn & Levin 1992). Workhouses were then the earliest and most punitive forms of what is now known as workfare. (DeNitto 1991). Workfare, today, means mandatory employment for welfare recipients that is required for them to receive their checks (Rosenblatt 1988).

Research on workfare programs is exhaustive. However, there has been little evidence about how participants viewed those programs. Most, if not all of this literature, has been conducted using a Positivist paradigm. In other words, a traditional scientific model of examining the issues has been used. Administrators and line workers are questioned, reports are studied, and previous research is brought together to tell the story
of the workfare problem. However, when the issue to be studied is one that predominantly involves women, the standard Positivist method does not fit. According to Liane Davis's 1986 article, "A Feminist Approach to Social Work Reform," women think in terms of the contextual and narrative. The focus is on the individual within the environment and analyzes how each contributes to the other. They are not separable, but enmeshed, and therefore concise and dichotomous answers to problems are difficult to find (Davis 1986).

In Helen Robert's (1988), introduction of Ten Years On, she indicates that before a study that involves women can be undertaken, it "...needs to begin from the realities of women's lives rather than attempting to awkwardly fit them into preexisting categories." A feminist's approach to research incorporates the more traditional and widely accepted methods of study and uses them to question principles and assumptions that have largely been gender divided (Roberts 1988).

What do female AFDC recipients want and need from workfare programs? It appears to be a simple question. The literature did not show that this question has been asked of the welfare recipients. The answers might assist in predicking a direction for structuring better welfare reform. The implication for social work practice becomes one of empowering the female GAIN client and setting an agenda for social change. Ultimately, defining a better program that serves both public "out-cry" and client needs will satisfy the values to which social work is held accountable and by which society's conscience may be best served.
The most current answer to the question of welfare reform came in 1988, when the Family Support Act was passed in attempt to get AFDC recipients into the work force and off the roles. Its aim was to promote economic self-sufficiency by providing education, job training, child care, and health benefits to AFDC recipients who got jobs (Cowan 1992; American Survey 1993). In California, GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence) is the workfare program established to put AFDC recipients to work.

A recent article by Jason De Parles (1993), appearing in both the Los Angeles Times and New York Times, stated that the Riverside County GAIN program has done more to raise earnings of welfare recipients than any other workfare program. The article stated that two years after entering the GAIN program, recipients were earning 55% more than AFDC recipients who were not involved in the program. However, the average Riverside County welfare recipient who participated in GAIN was still earning only slightly more than $3,400 annually. The GAIN program in Riverside was studied by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). The MDRC research was funded by a contract from California's State Department of Social Services (DSS), (Friedlander, Riccio, Freedman 1993). Therefore, DSS neglected to inform their clients that they were to be part of a study and, moreover, failed to protect the welfare of Riverside participants causing undue harm to control group members by withholding benefits, i.e., training and cash benefits (Morgan 1993). The funding agency (DSS) may be in sharp contrast to social work guidelines for ethical research.

An additional ethical concern is that DSS identified and produced a "new" target population in some counties that would be more likely to "succeed". This is the average
AFDC recipients as opposed to the hard-core population. Statistics show that the average AFDC family has a female head of household, (Gueron 1987; DeNitto 1991), with one to two children (Offner, American Survey 1993). The average family size is the same as middle-class families. Many of these families leave the welfare rolls on their own within an average of 27 months (DiNitto 1991; Sanger 1979). In fact, every year, between one-third and one-half of AFDC recipients leave the rolls, mostly through marriage (Offner 1992). In contrast, the original intent of the Family Support Act of 1988 was to reduce the dependency of the so called hard-core or unmotivated long-term clients who were the most costly beneficiaries to the system. However, today, "creaming," (the practice of skimming the most talented few off the top) is indicative in the Riverside office of GAIN, thereby, enabling the administration to show high placement rates (Whitman 1987).

There are multitudes of problems with workfare programs. "Workfare is expensive and costs about $2,000 per participant per year...," without including costs for day care (Offner 1992). For recipients, they only saw an increase in earnings of a mere $250 to $750 annually (Stoesz and Karger 1993). Furthermore, workfare programs only experienced a modest 1.3 percent reduction in their welfare roles by 1991 (Stoesz and Karter 1993). Another problem plaguing workfare programs is that each state, and sometimes each county within a state, has a lack of consistency in defining and collecting data that describes the program operations and results (United States General Accounting Office 1988).

Participation results vary as well. In the Riverside County GAIN office, clients are counted once in the month they were referred to the program, and once if they attended.
These numbers will never be the same because some of those referred will not attend GAIN programs in that month for various reasons. So, they will be referred again and again in subsequent months and counted as a referral each time. Of those who do attend, some will quit the program, again for a number of reasons. Some of those that drop-out will return through a subsequent referral and re-enter program attendance, getting counted again respectfully. All of this information related to GAIN attendance was provided by a Riverside GAIN specialist who let us review a GAIN monthly activity report. It is quite confusing.

Much previous research concerning the results of workfare programs points to their inefficiencies, or that they do little to reduce poverty, if not actually making it worse for the groups being targeted (Conniff 1992; Offner 1992; Cowan 1992). De Parles's 1993 article reports that the MDRC found a 55% increase in earnings of recipients in Riverside County who participated in the GAIN program, (Offner 1992), and noted that workfare only reaches one in five recipients. Offner indicates that conservatives want to cut-out expensive education programs and force everyone into low-wage jobs (1992). Noah Cowan writes that workfare is supplying businesses with a source for low-wage labor (1992). Other inadequacies that workfare programs do not address are issues such as creating jobs, discrimination, sexism, racism, and classism. Barbara Ehrenreich cites that 80 percent of women workers hold low paid jobs in such areas as clerical, sales, etc. (1986). In an 1989 interview with Ms. Beals of the Victorville GAIN office, she stated that of their participant group, 95 percent were in retail type jobs. In regard to the remaining 5 percent, she said most were composed of men entering skilled trades such as
Thus, the practice of creaming is again demonstrated and exemplified through the placement of men in higher paid jobs, furthermore touting them as their "poster child" (Morgan 1993). The reality is that female head of households are here to stay, and that it is unconscionable that women head half of all poor families. Women should, in fact, have the right and opportunity to earn family wages.

President Clinton supports building on the Family Support Act to form a compromise in which conservatives accept government's responsibility to help the poor to get job skills, and liberals accept that welfare recipients would enroll in training classes (American Survey 1993). It seems that everything written about whether workfare is working or failing, provides some type of focus on solutions or encouragement for the GAIN program. What is obviously missing in these documentations, reports, articles and the like, is an assessment of how the client has been effected by the program. Does the program address their needs in the context of their lives? There are many things that need to be known before successful welfare reform can be undertaken, including the personality of the client (Sanger 1979).

Conniff quotes an AFDC mother as saying, "You live in a situation that's so different from someone and you're trying to model a program for them. These people probably don't have any idea what it's like to be on public aid" (1992). The AFDC mother adds, "To actually come out and find out what the people need is beneath them" (Conniff 1992). This sentiment is echoed by groups that oppose welfare programs. The key to a successful program includes an abundance of client input in program design, education,
and peer support, along with financial support from the government to bring about self-
sufficiency (Cowan 1992).

Education and training are vital parts of welfare reform. This idea is not only held
by welfare reformers, but by businesses and human resource managers globally. Jac Fitz-
Enz is President of the Saratoga Institute, a consulting, research, and software firm, that
specializes in strategy, management development, and performance measurement. In his
1990 book, Human Value Management, he reports that for every 100 high school
students, at least 55 will not be available for employment by businesses. The correlation
of various industry and government reports show that federal and local governments, and
the armed forces, will take at least 20 graduates from the work force; an additional 20
students will never graduate and be available only to low-wage jobs and unemployment;
some women will become full-time mothers and homemakers; some students will be
chronically ill or disabled; and still others will limit themselves from the work force by
having a lack of technical training (Fitz-Enz 1990). Fitz-Enz also states that no more than
45 out of 100 graduates will ever reach the labor market, and half of them might pursue
advanced professional careers. So, it seems fair to say that many are educationally
unprepared for advancement in the labor market, which is a further reflection of the urgent
need for higher educational values in preparing GAIN participants to successfully enter the
work force. In fact, Lefkowitz and Withorn state "...that most women need
baccalaureate-level degrees even to begin earning bread winners' wages" (1986). This
idea is again reiterated by Frost in his statements that clients need to obtain a four-year
college education, especially women (1990). Again, the issue comes back to the dilemma
of how to combine appropriate workfare programs with the needs of the client as viewed from their perspective.

**RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

The purpose of this study was to address a gap which was found in the literature. Specifically, to address the question of how GAIN has affected the women who are now and have in the past participated in the GAIN program. Moreover, this study provided the GAIN program developers with an opportunity to hear and heed the concerns of these women. This was accomplished by providing the associated county agencies with a copy of this research project and by being available for discussion. It is intended that this project will provide an agenda for negotiation. A future goal of this study is to request a forum be developed with GAIN representatives, the women of these studies, and these researchers so that possible changes in the program could be negotiated. This study raised serious concerns surrounding the effectiveness and efficiency of the GAIN program for the respondents. It may be suggested that by addressing these program issues and correcting them that welfare dependency may be reduced for these participants. The program could then be able to better assist these women in escaping the negating circumstances of poverty.
Design

To answer this research question, the critical theory approach was employed, using the ideology which suggested that, GAIN, again, as in the past, stigmatized and stereotyped women in poverty as people who are unable to participate in any solution that effects their unique life experience. The women in this study were therefore given the opportunity to give their ideas on how best to achieve success towards self-sufficiency and design a plan of action for workfare reform. This was a qualitative study which used an in-depth approach to describe women’s opinions and perceptions. This modality facilitated an understanding of these views in an atmosphere which was safe. Interviews were conducted confidentially, thereby protecting identities and enabling free discussion.

Qualitative research offers a client driven medium to evaluate programs, as well as develop new policy, by reducing the client gathered data into a means for negotiation and action. This philosophy is further supported by Morris (1992) in her views on social work research. She offers the notion of understanding the full spectrum of the problem as being more sensitive to women than simply testing the relationship between variables. Further, the traditionally accepted ways of doing research looks at parts of the problem rather than the holistic picture. For example, if a stereotypical view of welfare women is used to evaluate a program, then the program will be implemented to reflect these stereotypical rationales and may not get at solutions for necessary change. Morris (1992) states, “... the administrator/policy maker often just needs to know who her or his client community is and whether that has changed over time as well as the effectiveness and
impact of the program” (p. 55). If research is conducted in a fragmented manner, the results are programs that could encourage a framework of discrimination for a certain population. Real needs are not recognized and solutions only transmit the researchers’ distorted view of the research question and the results are mootable. A feminist approach, therefore, cites structural inequalities as the reason for social problems and may serve as a basis for further research. Social Work practice from this world view suggests that data should be interpreted “as information for making community changes and instigating a full range of services.” Meanwhile, Morris (1992) said that the contribution of the data is directed at “... changing the class or gender inequities in the community and adopt[ing] an action approach to research.”

Hence, a compelling reason for doing this type of research is that it is important to understand the information while keeping the integrity of the respondents’ perceptions. A feminist perspective critical theory was developed which allows the collected data to provide the direction in which the persons involved have an active role in shaping their world. This process generated new and creative meaning, thus permitting social change through an organized effort, and thereby allowing the participants to design a work program that fit their needs. This is a fundamental belief of social work practice. Further, this research adopted the perspectives and interests valued by social work in that it is empowering the interview population. The data, in essence, spoke for itself rather than assuming what the needs of clients were. Inquiries lead to an action and process created by and for women of poverty. Finally, it was the intent of this study to hear the voice of welfare dependent women talking about how GAIN has had an impact on their welfare
dependency, thereby, leading us to discoveries of neoteric and innovative answers to a problem that appears to be obscured by restrictive quantitative measures.

**Sampling**

A non-probability snowball convenience sampling process was used which resulted in a sample of twenty women who were past and present GAIN participants in San Bernardino County. The table on the following page briefly illustrates the demographical aspects of the client population. The composite of recipient characteristics include: age, marital status, mandatory or voluntary participation, client ethnicity, GAIN workers’ ethnicity, GAIN workers’ gender, number of years the client has received AFDC, why the clients originally applied for AFDC, current employment status, employment history, number of years of education, degrees or certificates received, and the overall rating that the client gave the GAIN program (from 1 to 5, with 5 being best).

The following analysis of the table of demographics will give the readers an overall picture that was collected in the sample and describes what these participants “looked like.” These particular clients do not seem to fit the stereotypical picture of a welfare mother. Most were in their early or late thirties, and 60% were not unwed mothers. The majority of the women were Caucasian. The GAIN workers for these clients seemed to be a good mix of ethnicity and most were female. These clients, for the most part, were on AFDC from 6 to 8 years and nearly all of them are still receiving some kind of benefits. Many of the respondents remarked that they had been “on and off AFDC” because often the jobs they had did not compensate or tolerate mothers who were raising children by
themselves. These women had unique problems such as child care, child illness, and a lack of necessary or high cost insurance benefits. Although other working women experience these problems, these women had no support system, such as being able to fall back on a husband. Although there are now “family leave of absence laws,” most of the leave of absences are without pay and so these women found themselves back in the local AFDC office. A few women cited being single and having children as a reason for unemployment. They stated that they were fired when employers found out that they were unwed mothers and were then forced to apply for aid. Others stated that employers found creative ways to dismiss them when they became pregnant while others said that they worked until a few days before delivery. More than half of the study population was unemployed in spite of their GAIN participation. All of those who had found employment said that GAIN had not helped them get a job; that they found it on their own. Others cited a child’s disability for the inability to secure stable employment. For instance, if a child is asthmatic or has severe learning problems this may mean frequently having to take off work because of illness, doctors’ appointments, or school appointments.

Although these clients may fit the definition of “hard-core” as defined by the amount of years they have received AFDC, none of them are hard-core because of a lack of job skills. However, a high number of these women realized that they needed further education in order to assure their independence from AFDC. They said that unless you have a BA or an MA, the money and the benefits are not there. The majority of the women who are getting or have gotten a BA or MA degree have done so in spite of GAIN. A number of the women have had to quit school because of GAIN. A few have
said that GAIN insisted that they come into the GAIN office during the same time as their scheduled final exams. This conflict in scheduling jeopardized a whole course of school work due to GAIN’s inflexibility with these clients. Some have given up trying to go to school because of GAIN’s interference. For example, the respondents disclosed that they had to take forms into their professors often during a quarter to verify their attendance and grades. This was demoralizing, not only because they felt like children, but because the professor was then made aware that they were on AFDC.

Ninety percent of the respondents were mandated to participate in the GAIN program. After compiling and reflecting back on the interviews, this type of participation raised serious questions for the interviewers. For instance, why was a woman in her early thirties, who had been on and off AFDC frequently for only 3½ years, be mandated to participate in a program targeted for the hard-core and unmotivated? The interview question asked of the respondents was, “How were you encouraged to participate in GAIN?” This brought about a response of laughter and/or skepticism from nearly all of the recipients. The average reply was, “We were not encouraged. We were forced!”

All 20 women were intelligent and wanted to find stable employment. The voluntary respondent who had been made mandatory even has Chron’s Disease. Now, however, she is recovering from gunshot wounds received from a jealous ex-husband on whom she had a restraining order. She has struggled through physical therapy, and even though the doctor said she would always be in a wheel-chair, she is walking with a cane. These women are not unmotivated, but they do have unique circumstances that need to be addressed. For instance, an explanation of the low rating for GAIN was explained by one
woman who commented to a GAIN trainer, "...well, if you are not willing to work with a single parent, what's the use of getting that job? ...like what happens if my kid needs to go to the doctor?" Another respondent exemplified this rating further by stating, "I was doing a better job on my own [looking for work]. The hours I sat there listening to their 'happy talk,' I could have been out there searching for work."
### Table of Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mean: 33.74</th>
<th>Range: 27-46</th>
<th>1 respondent claimed to be between 40 &amp; 50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Range Detail</strong></td>
<td>3 clients=27-28; 6 clients=30-32; 6 clients=33-36; 4 clients=39-46; 60%=30-36; 20%=39-46; 15%=27-29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td>Single=8=40%; Divorced=7=35%; Separated=4=20%; Married=1=5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mand/Vol. Part.</strong></td>
<td>Mandatory=18 clients=90%; Voluntary=2 clients=10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>Caucasian=14 clients=70%; African American=4=20%; Latina=1=5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GAIN Worker Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>Caucasian=21; Latinos=6; African Amer=4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GAIN Wrkr Gender</strong></td>
<td>Female=23; Male=12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># Yrs. on AFDC</strong></td>
<td>Range=3.5 - 19; Mean=8.83; 75% Still On AFDC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years on AFDC Detail</strong></td>
<td>8 clients=40%=6-8 yrs; 4 clients=20%=3.5-5.0 yrs; 4 clients=20%=12-15 yrs; 3 clients=15%=9-11 yrs; 1 client=5%=19 yrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why apply AFDC?</strong></td>
<td>Unemployment; No Health Insur; Single Motherhood; No child support; Discrimination &amp; Unemployment per Single Motherhood; Divorce; Disabled Kids; Returned to School; Abandonment; Pregnancy; Disabled Husband; Homeless; Newborn child; Separated from Husband; Need Education to Get Job; In Between Jobs; Laid-Off; To Avoid Selling Drugs For Money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employed Now?</strong></td>
<td>Not Employed=11 clients=55%; Employed=9 clients=45%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment History</strong></td>
<td>All had employment history: Office Wrk, Student Wrk; Blue Collar Job; Childcare; Housekeeping; Healthcare; Restaurant, Retail &amp;/or Sales, Seasonal Jobs, Cosmetology, Apt Mgr, Case Mgr.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># Yrs. School</strong></td>
<td>Range=13-19; Mean=16.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degrees/ Certfct.</strong></td>
<td>MA=3; BA=7; AA=11; Certificates=35; Licenses=5; GED=2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Detail</strong></td>
<td>All Had HiSchool Educ; 6 clients=30%=17 yrs; 4 clients=20%=13 yrs; 3 clients=15%=14 yrs; 3 clients=15%=15 yrs; 3 clients=15%=19 yrs; 1 client=5%=16 yrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Licenser Detail</strong></td>
<td>Phlebotomy, Nurses Aid, Cosmetology, Foster Parent, Reg Nurse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**1-5 GAIN Rating *</td>
<td>1=7 clients=35%; 2=3 clients=15%; 3=3 clients=15%; -3=1 client=5%; -10=1client=5%; 0=5 clients=25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* some clients provided rating numbers outside of the 1 to 5 scale.
Instruments and Procedure

Fifteen open ended questions were used to encourage in-depth responses from research participants. Another 29 demographical questions were asked. Twelve demographical questions were omitted from analysis because responses were incomplete or dissatisfactory. We addressed seven topics: (1), experience; (2), opinion; (3), feelings; (4), knowledge; (5), perception; (6) suggestions for improvement of the GAIN program; and (7), background and demographics. Further, interviewees were given the chance to voice any other comments they felt were relevant. This gave interviewees the opportunity to expand on questions to be asked and address any issues that may not have been covered.

The time-length of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Many of the respondents felt the need to vent. Others were excited about being asked for the first time for their opinions related to the workfare program.

Each participant was separately interviewed in person. The interviews were conducted primarily in the homes of the interviewees. Other interviews were carried out in locations such as restaurants that were more convenient to the participants. Researchers made written notes while conducting the interview as appropriate. While the majority of the research project was completed through a collaborative effort by the researchers, the data collection was conducted separately. Each researcher interviewed respondents independently while utilizing the same questionnaire. This was done so that participants would not be overwhelmed by the presence of two researchers. To insure validity, responses were double checked with the participant.
Data Collection Procedures

To reduce the potential for the influence of subjectivity and biases of the interviewers, the researchers adapted the coding process employed by the Constructivist paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) to analyze the data. From the individual responses of the interviews, the meanings and constructs were reconstructed or broken-down into groups of similar concepts or ideas. In doing so, the responses were thought of in terms of answering the basic questions of this research, specifically, what was the effect of GAIN on participants as respondents saw it.

Data analysis was done through a content analysis. This was done after every interview so that all aspects of the question were addressed. The analysis led to a reconstruction of the separate constructions. It was not a reduction, but an inductive process. The steps used in the process are called unitizing and categorizing. Units are predecessors of categories. To determine units, one gathers "chunks of meaning" organized to put things together that go together. They must be the smallest piece of data possible that can stand by itself.

Units were derived from the interview notes. From these units, categories were compiled in a way that some other reader would understand, thereby, leaving an audit trail. It was opted to be over-inclusive rather than to leave out information. Most categories were produced during the first stage of analysis and dwindled off in subsequent review as the process became more fully developed.

Categories were made from the units that consisted of the same content. These categories were set-up to explain the data, rather than create a distribution of cases. Rules
were then devised that described properties that justified inclusions and replications. This category set provided a reasonable construction so that an auditor could review the collection. At first, categories were organized by similarities of whether they "looked alike" or "felt alike." Further on, categories were grouped by the rules of inclusion.

This process also assisted in finding categories that did not meet all rules for inclusion. The data was then further analyzed to see if new sub-categories were needed or if existing categories had to be re-defined. For instance, treatment of participants in the self-initiated program seemed to emanate and form its own distinctive sub-group. Upon completion of the content analysis, the categories were reviewed for accuracy. Unassignable categories did not exceed five to seven percent of the total data. Overlapping categories, or categories with more than one meaning, were rewritten into separate categories. If a category was too large, it was sub-divided into smaller categories. Incomplete or dissatisfactory categories were omitted. An example of an incomplete category resulted when analyzing if the participant had any other family members receiving AFDC now or in the past. The researchers had hoped to see if there was a generational use of AFDC among these recipients. Unfortunately, the question was asked improperly and did not ask which relatives had received aid thereby leaving insufficient data. There were four reasons to either stop collecting data, or to continue the process. They were; an exhaustion of sources, a saturation of categories, an emergence of irregularity, and an over-extension of irrelevant information.

The intent then was to establish or create new topological dimensions and relationships. This was accomplished by a constant comparison of data by the researchers.
Thus, the only quantifying that was done with qualitative data was the counting of the categories to establish chunks of meaning. An illustration of this phenomenon is, when tallied, a pattern materialized between the effective participation in GAIN and the lack of sufficient transportation. Previously, the researchers were aware of the possibility of, say, child care problems as this has been well published. However, the conveyance of the respondents and their children as to the resulting travel time factor involved had been overlooked in regards to accessing the program or subsequent work. Hence, by constantly comparing data, a critical theory from a feminist perspective emerged.

After the content of analysis was completed, aliases were assigned in order to retain the feminist ideal of the respondent being a collaborator in an egalitarian process by using specific quotes. This mode also upheld our chosen value to give AFDC/GAIN women a voice which empowered them and provided them an atmosphere for change. For instance, many of the women interviewed displayed an attitude of helplessness in changing the system that directly effected their family life. Due to the constant threat of losing their only means of supporting and feeding their children, they had learned to blindly cooperate, and saw no other choices. Moreover, it did not create an avenue of negotiation for change nor a method to point out their specific needs. This then reinforced the dependency while closing options to achieve independence from AFDC. However, an interesting point was that none of these women displayed hopelessness. They all wanted off the system completely, but lacked the proper resources to accomplish this.

Consequently, the study suggested that more meaningful inferences could be derived from qualitative data than from quantitative methods.
Next, in order to report the emerged categories, data was summarized to retain meaning and quotations were utilized to support these meanings. Following this part of the process a table was devised to illustrate a comparison between the demographic information and each client. The purpose was to give the reader a better overall picture of how each respondent compared to another, which seemed to get lost in many quantitative studies.

Also, a written discussion continued the review and summarization of the data. The goal of this research was to create an action agenda so that women, with the help of our empowering research, could devise and promote superior programs to better meet the needs of this population.

**Strengths and Limitations**

The limitation of this study was that the answers to the questions only pertained to the sample population interviewed. Also, the answers submitted by the interviewees were subjective and researchers could not validate comments made by the participants.

Conversely, the strengths of this procedure were that the process gave opportunity to women of poverty to voice their concerns about what was and continues to be done to them. This method of compiling data controlled for misunderstandings in individual interpretations. The data reflected a more comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the current GAIN program from the perspective of study participants and thereby closed the division between promulgated reports of GAIN's success and the realities of impact on the participants served.
Protection Of Human Subjects

To protect the study population from harm of any kind, and to guarantee issues of confidentiality, a formal, written, informed consent document was devised. Further, participants and researchers were required to sign the aforementioned informed consent document prior to any interviews or participation in the study. A copy of the informed consent document was provided to those signing the form(s). All research documents were kept in a metal, flame-resistant lock box. The researchers had the only keys to ensure participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

Finally, before ending the interviews, interviewees were given the names and phone numbers of the researchers for any subsequent clarification they may have needed, and for possible agency referrals as necessary. The researchers, upon completion of the study, contacted participants by mail, with an invitation to meet and discuss the findings of the research, and to develop strategic plans for an action agenda. Following this, the long term goal will be to have the participants and/or the researchers present this agenda to GAIN representatives for the purpose of negotiation.
RESULTS

In analyzing the data from the interviews, 8 categories were developed. The categories emerged after reviewing the questions from the interview and then by looking at the corresponding answers to reveal similarities. The categories were: initial response to GAIN program; client/worker relationships; the GAIN contract and consequences; SIP, (Self Initiated Program); positives/ negatives of GAIN program; overall impact of GAIN program; current impressions of GAIN; and changes participants perceived as needed. Responses were reported objectively by using the coding process and taking into account their frequency and intensity. To support the findings relevant quotes were used to illuminate the feeling and thoughts behind the responses. The prevalent negative atmosphere of the responses was formulated by the participants and do not reflect the opinions or biases of the researchers. The full range of responses were considered and evaluated towards maintaining chunks of meaning that were quantified by the counting of the data in the assignment of the categories. In-depth results follow under the 8 category headings.

I. Initial Response to GAIN Program

A category of first impressions concerning the GAIN program arose after combining analogous questions and their subsequent answers. Further, these impressions
were preconceived by the participants before they had full knowledge of what the program entailed.

Eighteen participants stated they were “forced” or “mandated” to participate in the GAIN program. The remaining two participants were voluntary participants, although one of them after passing her assessment test, was made mandatory.

Twelve stated that they were already involved in education programs prior to their enrollment in GAIN. One of these women stated that she was told to quit school in order to participate in GAIN. Another woman said she thought GAIN was a good program. The other 10 respondents stated feeling coerced, threatened, patronized, and or that GAIN was a waste of time, and that it was an invasion of privacy.

The next 4 respondents had initial impressions of being able to get help in finding work or returning to school. One of these women stated that the program had “employees with below average IQs.” Another said, “It was silly and a waste of time.” Two others initially believed that GAIN would help them find a job. One of them said she attended job search for 5 days and then found employment after 1 day.

Many respondents complained of the “simplistic” test or assessment tool that GAIN uses to see if participants are “work ready.” If they are “work ready” they receive no training nor re-education. If a participant failed the test, they were made to attend a class that taught them interview skills and knowledge and how to fill out an application. Most of the recipients said that they already had these skills and did not need these classes. Some women did like the motivational class they had. Next, according to the participants,
they were "...handed a phone book, and a phone, and told to find a job." Most women said that this process was ludicrous and a waste of time.

It was said that the test was "3rd grade level" and that, "Anyone with common sense could pass it." A number of women said they just needed their skills updated to improve their knowledge and familiarity with computers and related software applications. One woman stated that she had been through GAIN twice and was told that the complete assessment costs about $200 each time. She could have had a course on computers for much less. However, she is still unemployed and is now pregnant again.

The remaining 4 women were not involved in training or actively looking for work. Their impressions were initially that of opportunity and of a motivational nature. One of these women had recently suffered the death of a child. One week after her disabled child's death, she received a letter stating that she had to report to GAIN by the end of the next week. GAIN offered to defer her for a period of time. She declined because she said, "I thought they could help me find work."

To recapitulate these results, it appears that most of these women were mandated into the program even though they had already started their own program towards becoming independent.

II. Client/Worker Relationship

Twelve of the GAIN participants indicated a definite negative relationship with their GAIN Employment Specialist. The words used to describe their GAIN worker included: rude, disrespectful, demanding, one-sided, belittling, criticizing, arrogant, no
feelings, incompetent, harassing, difficult worker, adversarial, demeaning, unconcerned, inconsiderate, snotty, intimidating, and aggravating. Six of the respondents viewed their client/worker relationship as positive. Here the respondents reported that their workers were understanding, amicable, friendly, helpful, cooperative, or encouraging. The remaining 2 women said they had multiple workers during GAIN participation. Although many of the 20 interviewed women reported having more than 1 GAIN worker, these 2 gave specific relationship perceptions. One said that her first worker was very good, the second was so-so, and the third was a “pompous bitch”. The other respondent said that she liked the first worker, but that the second and third were “dip-sticks”.

The essence of this section is that many respondents saw their GAIN workers as gainsayers, while less than a quarter of the women saw the GAIN specialists as helpful. Two participants voiced dichotomous views when comparing more than one worker.

III. The GAIN Contract and Consequences

This category was a compilation of questions that addressed issues surrounding the GAIN contract. Specifically, questions on participant input, perceived outcomes if services were declined, and disagreements with the GAIN contract were combined. The interviews showed that 13 respondents had either no input, or were told what they would do regarding their contract. One woman had no input because GAIN deferred her because her children were too young even though she had volunteered to participate. Eight of these women said that they had no input or that they just signed and
dated the contract. Four were told that they were job-ready and that they should go find work. The 7 other respondents had various degrees of input. One said she found out that she could work 15 hours per week to satisfy GAIN’s requirements. Another woman stated, “I wrote it (the GAIN contract).”

The perceptions of those interviewed showed that 19 understood that they would be sanctioned or cut-off of AFDC, Food Stamps, and Medi-Cal if they disagreed with the GAIN contract or declined GAIN services altogether. One woman was declined services by GAIN and deferred.

To epitomize this category, 65% of the women were dictated to and not given any opportunity to provide input into a contract that could affect their destiny. Conversely, 35% stated that they had various amounts of input. An overwhelming number of respondents cited that they were aware of the coercive rules of the program. If they did not fully cooperate with the program and the contract, they could lose moneys, that for many, were life sustaining. One woman was denied services.

IV. The Self Initiated Program Services (SIP)

The Self Initiated Program (SIP) is a component of GAIN which assists recipients in completing some kind of training or education that was begun prior to becoming involved with GAIN. This category emerged from questions which directly addressed perceptions of those in the SIP program and those not in the SIP program. These perceptions focused on respondents’ feelings, treatment, and services that were received from each component of the program.
Of the 20 interviews, 12 reported having involvement with GAIN’s Self Initiated Program (SIP). When asked about the services received from SIP, 6 stated that they received no services; one reported that she took a part-time job to become deferred from GAIN while she continued her schooling; 5 received various services including child care payments to their providers, reimbursement for books, mileage, and other school and job club related expenses. However, of the 5 reporting having received services, one said she was at risk of losing her child care provider because of the three to five month delay on GAIN’s part in reimbursements. Another woman said that she already had child care and mileage covered through a program at her school, but GAIN insisted that she drop them and take the GAIN services. She did so and 3 months later GAIN informed her that they were out of funds. She was denied financial services and left to pay for her own child care and mileage out of her AFDC grant.

Seven of the respondents were not in the SIP program. Three of these women received no services from GAIN, while 4 received a variety of services ranging from mileage reimbursements to job interviews, and included child care reimbursements while attending GAIN’s on-site program, money for monthly bus passes to attend GAIN programs, and for going to job interviews.

This segment may be elaborated by noting that more than half of the respondents were in the SIP program. Of those people, half of them received no services; one was deferred, while the rest received some type of services. Seven were not part of the SIP program and most of them did receive services. Many participants divulged that there were adversities connected to those support services.
**Treatment**

The perception of treatment was delineated because the category was separate from, but related to the SIP program issues. Thus, the results from the respondents' answers provided a clear meaning for a separate sub-category.

Of the 12 participants who were on the SIP program, 2 said that they were treated fairly after they asserted themselves and made it clear to their worker that they had career goals. One interviewee said her first worker was kind, gentle, and personable. Her second worker made the same mathematical errors over and over in computing her child care providers' reimbursement and the payments were often held up. Nine other interviewees implied they were: intimidated; were made to second guess themselves as to their own competency; were forced to quit school; found the SIP program to be belittling, intrusive, erratic and haphazard; that the SIP program ruins peoples lives; they felt harassed; that the program put undue stress on clients; that the program made it difficult to continue their education, and it interfered with already made educational plans.

For the 7 respondents that were not in the SIP program, one did not comment on treatment; 2 said they were treated “pretty well” as long as they went along with their worker; 4 said they were treated with distrust, like a child, and with meanness. One of these stated she was treated “…like the girl in The Color Purple”, e.g., “…degraded, demoralized and made to feel very unimportant by someone of my own race.”
One other respondent was not assigned to the SIP program or other GAIN programs after she threatened to take legal action against the GAIN program, the County, and the GAIN worker. She was deferred from GAIN “permanently and indefinitely.”

To outline the results of this portion, of the 12 SIP participants, 9 reported detrimental treatment. The remaining 7 appeared to experience the coldness of classism.

V. Positives/Negatives of GAIN Program

This category was created out of the question that dealt with perceived positive and negative aspects that clients experienced while on the GAIN program. It secreted a meaning that stood on its own. One woman did not respond in regard to positives and negatives about the GAIN program. Another woman stated that there were neither positives nor negatives and that it was “…like being in study hall after school. If you want to mess around, you mess around. If you want to do your work, you do it.”

**Positives:**

Twelve respondents said that they received some positives from the program. Six of these women reported they received some valuable work training or that their worker was positive. The 6 others that reported positives indicated a less direct benefit from GAIN. Although the following comments appear to be unfavorable, they were collected from the question presented to the respondents, i.e., “What were the positive aspects that you experienced from the GAIN program?” This was not meant to mislead the reader, but only to report the data as accurately as possible. One said that she liked the interview
outfit; one said that it was positive that she never received services from GAIN; one said that she learned to read the fine print in anything having to do with DPSS and GAIN; one said that the money she received from GAIN was positive; another said that a positive aspect was that the whole GAIN ordeal built strength and courage in her to fight them. Lastly, one respondent said that the positive for her was, "...in the fantasy, that finally, I'm gonna get help and direction." Another 6 respondents reported there was nothing positive about GAIN.

Negatives:

Of the 18 women that responded to the question of negatives in the GAIN program, all gave a listing on negatives. One woman said that due to her GAIN participation she ended up having to extend her college education for another year. Three others cited the program as a waste of time either because they were being taught things they already knew or did not need, or because it was childish. Six women described their negative impressions as being more of a bureaucratic nature. They cited repetitive paperwork, frequently changing rules, GAIN bookkeeping errors, and that they were still unemployed as their negative impressions. Eight other respondents stated their negative impressions as being attributed to their GAIN workers and/or other GAIN staff (teachers, trainers, supervisors).

In restating this grouping; 2 responded with ambivalence to the questions, while 6 reported real benefits, 6 underrated the advantages, and 6 more saw no positives. Next, 6 saw the down side of GAIN being with the program itself, while 6 others viewed problems
being with the GAIN staff. Another 3 thought the program was superfluous due to prior self-knowledge.

VI. Overall Impact of GAIN Program

In developing this category, similarities between questions that addressed issues of client expectations and GAIN’s effectiveness towards getting off AFDC were combined. This was because they seemed to encompass the clients’ conception of how GAIN had impacted their lives and to show the cause and effect between participation in the GAIN program.

Expectations of the GAIN program were not met for 17 respondents. Two others reported that their expectations were met because they expected to get nothing and received nothing from GAIN. The remaining respondent said her expectations were overmet because she received transportation reimbursements, which made her more diligent about going to school.

Regarding whether participation in GAIN helped participants get off AFDC, one woman reported that she was still being sanctioned for refusing to quit school to participate in GAIN. Three others stated that some things GAIN had to offer were helpful to varying degrees. All 3 of these women also reported that they were still receiving full AFDC benefits. It was clearly stated by 16 other respondents that their participation in GAIN had not helped them towards getting off AFDC. Three of these women indicated that their GAIN participation had an opposite effect or hindered their progress towards getting off AFDC. Another 5 of these women said they were already involved in school
or actively looking for work before GAIN. Further, they said that they finished school or found jobs without GAIN's help.

A synopsis of this division reveals that 17 women did not have their expectations met, while 2 expected nothing and "got nothing." One said her expectations were met because the services she received left her with a feeling of indebtedness and thereby provided her with the impetus for completing her goal. In reviewing whether GAIN reduced AFDC dependency, 16 respondents saw no help, 3 saw it as a boon but still receive AFDC, one was punished, and 5 cited their SIP status. None of the respondents claimed GAIN as the direct factor in directly removing them from the welfare roles.

VII. Current Impressions of GAIN

Participants were asked about their impressions of GAIN considering their current GAIN status and progress thereof. From the responses, this category emerged to focus on evaluating the GAIN program from the participants' perspective.

One person reported that without the help of GAIN she would have had to get a part-time job to continue attending school. The remaining 19 stated various levels of dislike for the GAIN program. One of these said she was, "...happy to be continually deferred." Another said of the GAIN program that they are, "...not really out to help you, but make themselves look good." Another said the GAIN program was, "...propaganda -- what our country stands for is everything that GAIN isn't; life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Two others commented they were happy to be off of GAIN. Three more
respondents stated that their current negative impressions were largely due to the workers in the GAIN program. Meanwhile, another 4 cited the program was a waste of time and they already knew more than it had taught them. Four more respondents reported their dislike of the GAIN program as being attributed to the fact that GAIN was an interference and/or hindrance to what they were already doing to advance themselves towards getting off AFDC.

The main point then being, is that 19 out of 20 women, in hindsight, voiced an intense amount of adverse opinions about the GAIN program. Only 1 respondent saw GAIN as being advantageous for her.

VIII. Changes Participants Perceived As Needed

After evaluating the program as it is now, participants were asked about the alterations they saw as necessary to create a more effective workfare program and thus provide a platform for social change. Additionally, there was an atmosphere of empowerment emanating from the clients as this question was asked thereby, justifying its inclusion as a separate “feeling” category.

Eleven women stated a need for GAIN workers to be better trained and more respectful towards clients. Seven said changes in the program should be made individualized to reflect client needs. Six women cited changes in the area of child care need to be made, including availability, affordability, and better pay to providers. One woman said, “I don’t want to neglect my kids.” Five women said they saw changes necessary around more appropriate job training, more and better job leads, and more
networking efforts between GAIN and the business community. Five more respondents said changes in the system structure and regulations are needed. Another 4 also said there is a need to increase other supportive services. Four more found changes were needed around issues of education such as, advocating for it and encouraging it. Changes in existing transportation services were cited as necessary by 3 other women. Finally, 3 respondents suggested changes to include an avenue of recourse for clients along with a client advocacy mechanism such as having someone to turn to that had “been there” and understood her unique circumstances.

In view of the overwhelming amount of unfavorable and adverse opinions surrounding the GAIN program from these women, the researchers see this section as being critical to the study. This part did convey a touch of optimism in that the women implied that with changes the GAIN program could work. To amplify the summary of suggestions, the following list is provided. Eleven women saw problems with the GAIN workers in regard to a lack of training and respect for the client. Seven stated the program should attend to the individual; 6 cited child care issues; 5 saw gaps in training and job placement; 5 indicated the system as an issue; 4 said there should be more emphasis on education; 3 shared transportation barriers; and 3 said an integral change was needed in client recourse and representation.
DISCUSSION

What do female AFDC recipients want and need from workfare programs? This was the question originally proposed for this study. The intent of asking such a question was to empower poor women by giving them an opportunity to finally voice their opinions, wants, and needs about workfare and the impact it has had on their lives. The following discussion offers insights into the participants' ideas, as well as offering their implications and explanations for the results of this study. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research and evaluation for social work practice are noted. Lastly, a suggested model for social change and action is given in order to address the needs and wants of GAIN participants and to be considered by workfare policy makers.

Since the primary purpose of this project was to give GAIN participants a voice, this discussion begins with issues of participants' feelings about being able to influence the GAIN program. The discussion reflects these areas: clients' perceptions which include, a lack of input, positives and negatives, GAIN workers, and inefficiencies of the GAIN program. Next, issues around education; "creaming"; unanticipated results; client ratings; and overall impressions will be addressed.
Clients’ Perceptions

There were several areas in which the participants’ voice suggests that clients have had no input into GAIN. When our participants were asked about their GAIN contracts, an overwhelming 65% said they had virtually no input. Not only that, all had a full understanding that if they did not cooperate with this GAIN contract they would be sanctioned and/or cutoff from AFDC. A speechless cooperation, or cooperation without a mutual exchange of ideas, creates a type of program that denies one the right to self determination. Arbitrarily assigning contractual goals, without taking into consideration clients’ needs and wants, leads to ineffective cooperation. A feminist point of view would emphasize that a program contract which reflects the realities of the welfare mothers' environment must be developed rather than simply imposing requirements on GAIN participants.

To illustrate this voiceless phenomenon, we turn to participants’ positive and negative impressions of GAIN. Both the positives and negatives, then, seem to suggest why the majority of participants felt that their expectations were not met. As for the positives of the GAIN program, very few of those interviewed believed the program had any merit. Most respondents that reported any positives at all, said that the coercive nature of the GAIN program heightened their instinct to self protect. This self actualization occurred by increasing their own survival skills and knowledge about the system, in order to participate within the constraints of the system.
The negatives of the program were the feeling that GAIN was; a waste of time, childish, bureaucratic, and that the GAIN worker seemed inept. Further, they added that GAIN intervention did not help them to get off AFDC. However, those that were off AFDC also said that it was not a direct result of their GAIN participation. The participants’ overall evaluation of the program were also overwhelmingly negative. Many saw GAIN as a control tactic and felt powerless. As one woman stated, “Just give us a fighting chance!” All but one had adverse opinions about the GAIN programs effected on them personally. They refer to such things as; the program being a waste of time, the ineptness of the workers, and the program being an interference and hindrance to their own goals. One woman viewed the program as a much too convenient political tool used to appease irate middle-class taxpayers.

More than half of the study group said that they had GAIN workers who were disrespectful or indignant. Further, the respondents seemed to think that the negative attitude of the GAIN workers was due to preconceived ideas about welfare recipients. In essence the workers had minimized the need for the client to be seen as an individual and failed to support and respect their independence and dignity. This perceived negativity by GAIN workers appeared to be victimizing and disempowering vulnerable clients. For example, one respondent equated her encounter with her GAIN worker as being comparable to an interrogation by a “parole officer,” while another said it was like “having ‘Gidget’ for a teacher.” Also, this shows how a feminist style of communication, which encourages relationship building and mutuality, is lacking for these respondents and their GAIN workers. Instead, what often occurred was a message that enforced an air of
competition between the GAIN worker and the client. This further facilitated an attitude of superiority on the part of the worker which created distance from the client. An illustration of this problem was expressed as recipients complained about being yelled at and/or sworn at by the GAIN worker. Another respondent observed, “Just because you’re low income doesn’t deny the fact that you’re human.”

More in-depth review of the interviews suggests impressions of inefficiencies in the GAIN program by respondents. Perhaps most noteworthy is the fact that so many (11) of the respondents are still unemployed even after going through the GAIN program. As for the 9 who are currently employed, all of them said they obtained their jobs by their own efforts and not with GAIN’s help. This introduces the question of, what exactly is GAIN citing as their successes in relation to these participants? Continuing with the perceived inefficiencies, there were a high number of our interviewees receiving AFDC for 6-8 years, while only 20% received aid for fewer years. For these recipients, GAIN is not effectively reducing their welfare dependency. Additionally, 75% of the respondents are currently receiving AFDC. This is, again, evidence of how the existing GAIN program has missed the boat regarding getting these women off of public aid.

Education Level

The study group had an extremely high level of educational attainment. (Of the 9 respondents that are working, 7 have degrees that are at BA level or above.) All of the clients we interviewed had a high school education along with many types of certificates of training. The literature review states that there is a realistic opportunity for extending
opportunities for those going on to get a 4 year college degree in programs like GAIN. Higher education allows participants alternative opportunities so that they do not have to take low wage jobs thereby not continuing the cycle of dependency. The point is that a high school education is not enough for a recipient to successfully exit the welfare roles. Advocating for higher educational standards in a country that is continuously advancing in the development and use of technology is a more reasonable assumption to pursue, especially for female head of households. As one woman stated, the goal of becoming a permanent tax payer cannot be achieved without a decent education and adequate pay.

**Creaming**

The word “creaming” means, “to take the best part from...” Creaming occurs when a person or group of people are selectively singled-out of a larger group because they have the highest probability for finding work. Those who are “chosen” represent the most educated, experienced and qualified from the group. Creaming appeared to occur among these women, in that they were mandated to be in GAIN specifically for the reason of fulfilling the intentions of the Family Support Act and were highly educated. The Family Support Act says that, in order to reduce welfare dependency, workfare programs must target the hard-core and unmotivated recipients. However, all of these clients have had previous work experience. In keeping with national statistics, Abramovitz (1994) stated that, nationally, 35% to 40% of women on welfare have also had previous work experience. As for the 20 interviewees of this study, some were in technical careers.
However, most of them were already involved in some type of training prior to GAIN's interventions. Twelve of these women were involved in the Self Initiated Program (SIP). To be involved in the SIP program one has to already be in school or in a training situation. Four more foresaw GAIN as giving them hope in being able to end their poverty and welfare dependency. This shows that these clients were not unmotivated, but rather, motivated in their independent quest to help themselves off AFDC. In fact, one participant observed that, "It seemed everyone there was already looking for work [prior to their mandatory participation in GAIN]."

Creaming is seen in the educational levels that many of the participants had achieved. Creaming involves the skimming of the most talented few such as those with work experience or with some advanced education, thereby allowing administration to show high job placement rates. This was illustrated by 11 respondents who reported receiving AA degrees while several others had even more advanced educational experience. The point is, that for these women basic or remedial education alone will not reduce their welfare dependency.

**Unanticipated Results**

Although, much of the data collected was predictable there were some unanticipated results. They were in 3 areas: classism, health care issues, and marital status. As data was collected, a lack of information around these issues seemed to
emerge. In hind sight, if we had developed additional questions, this information would have been more fully encaptured.

Classism was alluded to by a few respondents in relation to the treatment they received from their GAIN worker. This could have occurred because of GAIN workers' stereotype of women on welfare or, as one woman said, "You can't group people like a bunch of animals and expect success."

Furthermore, there was at least an indication by some that they would have lost their health care benefits (Medi-Cal) if they had not complied with the GAIN program. Medi-Cal may have been mentioned due to the fact that most recipients know that health care is essential to transition off AFDC and into the work force.

Another point of interest was found after analyzing marital status. The data revealed 60% of the clients were not unwed mothers or single. There is an often misunderstood assumption that implies that unwed motherhood is not strictly a phenomenon of teenagers. In our study 40% were unwed mothers, with our youngest mom being 27 years old. This is contrary to the current political observations that most recipients are either teenagers or unwed

Program Rating

Participants were asked to rate the GAIN program on scale of 1 to 5, one being low and five high. Most participants put 1, or 0. Zero was a rating introduced by the participants themselves. Some reasons why this may have happened are related to the treatment received by the participants from their GAIN worker, and by the fact that they
felt coerced by being placed in mandatory status. They had difficulty in obtaining educational goals because of GAIN interference, and believed that the services offered, in general, were less than adequate. One participant observed, "All GAIN does is band-aid big wounds."

**Overall Impressions**

While only one participant had overall appreciation and praise for GAIN, 19 others were truly dissatisfied and disenchanted by their experience. It was also made clear to the researchers that none of the 20 women thought the GAIN program was completely without merit under ideal circumstances. Most of those who had already been involved in training or education prior to GAIN thought the program would and could be most helpful to those AFDC recipients who were not taking any initiatives to help themselves off the roles.

**Summary**

Although the responses and feelings expressed by these women were not surprising to the researchers, they did give implications for consideration in future workfare policy making. The respondents indicated that since they were not allowed to express their unique needs, the GAIN program failed them. GAIN did not get them off AFDC, nor did it get them a job. In the preceding paragraphs it has been demonstrated that given the opportunity to be heard, these women had relevant and valid insights as to how a more effective program could help them. These women were clear, thoughtful, and
knowledgeable about the problems and needed changes of GAIN. We would be remiss not to include their opinions in the following addendums and changes to the current GAIN program. Therefore, the respondents' suggestions were taken into consideration and the researchers added specific recommendations for program improvement.
Social Action Agenda

Redefining Clients' Needs

1. Adopt a new bill through Congress that stresses the need for “hard-core” recipients be engaged in career oriented jobs. The “hard-core” should be redefined to mean those recipients who need supportive services to achieve independence, and the term “hard-core” should not be taken to mean “unmotivated”.

2. Test recipients to see where their skills are lacking and also to assess where their strengths and talents lie. Suggest training that they are most interested in and have the aptitude for in careers that would be profitable and attainable as per the needs' assessment. Encourage and promote those already in self-initiated programs. Provide job placement services to those who have attained their education and training goals.

3. Current deferment practices need to be reviewed, and individual needs and problems taken into account as in the case of disabled children. The issue of transportation must be re-evaluated. For those who do not have their own available transportation and are using existing community bus services, a more reasonable time factor for travel should be established. For instance, those who have to commute over 30 minutes in one direction, (due to the distance or as a result of having to take children to child care), should be deferred until more reasonable transportation arrangements are available.
Client Support Services

4. Provide child care for all children regardless of age. This could be done by expanding Head Start to include pre-school and elementary age children up to the 4th grade. This would ensure that a full-time, credentialed staff was in place. This will be cost-effective in that the program with its trained staff and locations already exists and Head Start has been consistently proven effective for almost 25 years. Head Start is mandated by Federal guidelines that would also ensure the safety of the children. Next, use such comprehensive organizations such as Boy's Club for older children. Give incentives to communities to build or expand more of these facilities for the older children. For those who choose not to use these programs, provisions for appropriate referrals to child care services should be made. Adequate time should be allowed for parents to thoroughly investigate and screen child care providers so that the parents will have confidence that the provider is able to meet the child’s needs and that the child is indeed in a safe and nurturing environment.

5. Medicaid benefits will end when the participant’s new family health care benefits begin. This can be accomplished because they now have a decent job that provides benefits. If by chance the health care benefits are too costly to afford coverage of the dependents, benefits will be extended for one year.
Client Incentives

6. Provide incentives for those recipients who attained goals. This could include government coupons towards purchasing a car, or renting a home, or receiving US Savings Bonds.

7. For those AFDC recipients that are not receiving GAIN services, (such as those on the voluntary list, or those who are currently deferred from GAIN) a cash bonus will be given to those that provide transportation to active participants or to those who are volunteering at least 10 hours in the community, or to volunteers initiating job training on their own. This cash bonus may not be deducted from AFDC or Food Stamp benefits.

Business Involvement

8. Complete a needs assessment of the area to see which career jobs are available and pay high enough wages, and provide family health care benefits in order to make the necessary transition off welfare.

9. Offer tax based incentives to businesses for hiring recipients for career placement. Additional incentives will be offered for those placements having benefits such as health insurance and on-site child care facilities in place.
Gain Worker Competence

10. Have MSWs as case managers to insure that all recipients are dealt with in an individualistic manner. The researchers suggest MSWs because of their specific training and knowledge pertaining to the areas needing attention as mentioned by the respondents. This would include hooking recipients up with the proper resources and minimizing their barriers. At the inception of this program the social workers will be responsible for outreach in order to educate and promote the new program to the recipients and the community.

11. MSW workers will have a minimum of 16 hours of training every other year so that their skills may be reinforced and updated. Areas of training will include: cultural sensitivity, interpersonal relationships, working with a publicly diverse clientele, and developing communications skills.

Program Quality Control

12. Set up an evaluation system to be performed by past and present participants in the work program to evaluate the program. These people will be mandated to participate for 2 years in these evaluations. This will help to minimize the use of questionable practices.

13. Set up a policy board in the local programs that consists of present and past recipients and which will be over-seen by the director of the local program. Elected board members will serve for 1 year and staff will be available for support and advice.
14. So as to provide client advocacy and recourse, an oversight committee will be developed. It will be made up of past and present GAIN participants, social workers from GAIN, community leaders, and individuals from the business community.
At a recent NASW conference (April 1994) the well-known authority on welfare policy, Dr. Amy Abramovitz, was a key speaker. She spoke to President Clinton’s goals; of ending welfare as we know it and of putting a 2 year limitation on benefits. Clinton proposes to do this through sweeping welfare reform. However, it is quickly becoming evident to him and others that he lacks the funds to accomplish this goal. Dr. Abramovitz states that workfare, which is a part of welfare reform, is an attempt to change single or poor women’s behaviors and values in the current victim-blaming atmosphere where women are blamed for the desecration and failing morality of society and the family. She says, “We must look at who makes the rules and who benefits from them.” Being on welfare does not cause women to not work and is not the cause of unemployment, but poverty and the lack of jobs might lead to being on welfare. As emphasized in our research, until certain “road blocks” are addressed such as health insurance coverage, affordable child care, transportation, racial and sexual discrimination in the work-force, workfare will remain punitive in nature for the women in this study. Dr. Abramovitz concludes that work can give poor women “...independence, confidence, and a sense of control over their lives.” She goes on to say, “...but there is nothing dignifying about forced work or employment in menial, low paid, or sometimes dangerous jobs such as mopping floors or flipping burgers, while leaving children to navigate the streets all by themselves. It appears that women need to organize to protect their rights, for one never knows when she will need a helping hand through AFDC.” Dr. Abramovitz states, “An
injury to one (woman) is injury to all,” but moreover, “…when you punish the mother...you punish the children.”

Thus, by listening and heeding the voices of poor women perhaps then we shall see the truth. It is about time that the politicians stopped advancing their careers at the expense of poor women in making them the brunt of negative images and false assumptions. The fact is that the majority of poor women do not want or enjoy being on aid. They have dreams and aspirations like any other people. They want to become self-sufficient and able to give their children all the things any parent would want their children to have. These women just need some services that are appropriate to their needs.

As Social Workers, we have a responsibility more than any profession to assist these women in aspiring to attain their goals. We have, after all, identified that vulnerable populations are the focus of our jobs. Dr. Abramovitz asks that Social Workers help to “create a more positive climate for poor women.” We must deal with and oppose their exploitation rather than seeking to blunt and ridicule their behavior. These researchers go a step further. We ask that through advocacy and with the advanced knowledge of social work in community organizing we provide real opportunities for these women to acquire true self-determination. We must start with where the clients are and actively listen to them.

Obviously, this research is only a small beginning. If programs are to be truly effective in solving social problems, we must begin to understand and address the unique circumstances and social dynamics of that population. We must identify and be proactive in our efforts to overcome the barriers that impede social harmony and progress. It is in
the knowledge and perspective of this awareness that the results of this study indicate that poor women do have useful and important things to say. It would appear that if these types of research projects are continued, then those persons in charge of the programs and funds are obligated to honestly seek solutions instead of measuring success strictly in terms of votes.
1. **INVESTIGATORS NAMES:** Lori Lozano and Lori Richard  
   **Department:** Social Work  
   **Phone:** (909) 880-5501  
   If you are a student, please provide the following:  
   This research is for ( ) Thesis ( ) Honors Project ( ) Independent Study  
   ( ) Course ___________ (X) Other: Graduate Research Project  
   **Advisor's Name:** Dr. Teresa Morris  
   **Campus Phone** (909) 880-5501

2. **PROJECT TITLE** GAIN’s Loss is an Unheard Voice

3. **PROJECT REVIEW** (X) New Project (ID # will be assigned by IRB)  
   ( ) Revised Project (Give ID #)

4. **DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS** (Give approx. no. of subjects and categories that apply)  
   Gender (X) Female ( ) Male  
   Number: 30  
   ( ) CSUSB Students ( ) Children (17 or younger) ( ) Child Development Ctr.  
   ( ) Prisoners ( ) Patients in institutions (X) Other: Past and Present GAIN participants.

5. **SUBJECT RECRUITMENT.** Women who are past and present participants of GAIN will be selected by using a snowball convenience sample. The researchers have some acquaintance with some GAIN participants. These participants will also be asked for additional contact referrals to expand the pool of interviewees.
There will be a concerted effort to select respondents from the same ethnic proportions as AFDC recipients.

6. PROJECT DESCRIPTION. The subjects will be asked to participate in hour long interviews in various settings which will be held with the researchers. The objective of the research is to empower women, who have or are participating in GAIN by allowing them to voice their views on the program, while providing a catalyst for social change. Participants may be asked further questions if a lack of data is found in any area.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA. The confidentiality of the subjects will be strictly maintained by using an alias of their choosing. No identifying data will be used in publication or shared with other participants.

8. RISKS AND BENEFITS. There will be minimal risk to the participants in this study. The psychological risk may be that the participants become aware of their involvement in a program that may not live up to their expectations. The benefit is to offer hope to this vulnerable group by letting them finally have input, and giving them an opportunity for change after the study is completed. This will not only help participants, but also society by providing change that encourages independence from a stigmatizing and costly welfare system.

9. INFORMED CONSENT Form attached.

10. DEBRIEFING STATEMENT Form attached.

11. REVIEW CATEGORY. Certain types of research involving no more than minimal risk to subjects can be approved for "expedited review." Under these circumstances, only the Chair of the IRB and one other board member need review the application. If you desire expedited review, check the appropriate category below. If not, proceed to part 12.

( ) Yes, I wish to apply for expedited review, based on the following category:
   ( ) Collection of hair, nail clippings, teeth in a non-disfiguring manner.
   ( ) Collection of excretal and/or external secretions.
   ( ) Recording of data from adults using non-invasive procedures.
   ( ) Collection of moderate levels of blood samples from adults in good health.
   ( ) Voice recordings made for research purposes.
   ( ) Moderate exercise by healthy volunteers.
12. **ATTACHMENTS.** I have included copies of all relevant project materials and documents, including (check all that reply):

- (X) Surveys, questionnaires, or interview instruments.
- (X) Informed consent form.
- () Letters of approval from cooperative agencies, schools, or education boards.
- (X) Debriefing statements or explanation sheet.

13. **AFFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE:**

I agree to follow the procedures outlined in the summary description and any attachments to ensure that the rights and welfare of human subjects in my project are properly protected. I understand that the study will not commence until I have received approval of these procedures from the IRB and have complied with any required modifications in connection with that approval. I further understand that additions to or changes in the procedures involving human subjects or any problems with the rights or welfare of the human subjects must be promptly reported to IRB.

________________________  _______________________
Signature of Investigator                                Date

________________________  _______________________
Signature of Investigator                                Date

**APPROVAL OF FACULTY ADVISOR** (Required of all students)

________________________  _______________________
Signature of Advisor                                          Date
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

The study in which you are about to participate is designed to provide an exploration of the effects that the GAIN program has had on female participants within San Bernardino County. This study is being conducted by Lori Lozano and Lori Richard, under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Morris, Assistant Professor of Social Work. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will be approximately one hour in length. Questions will be asked concerning your participation in the GAIN program, as well as various demographic questions. It is the goal of this project to hear women's opinions about GAIN and to offer a forum for positive change. When the project is completed, participants will be asked to meet and discuss possible changes that would benefit female GAIN enrollees. Please Note: The researchers may need to re-contact you for additional information if deemed necessary for accuracy.

Please be assured that any information you provide will be held in strict confidence by the researchers. At no time will your name be reported along with your responses. All the data will be recorded with alias names of your choosing. The Department of Social Services has no knowledge of your participation in this study so that your anonymity is further protected. At the conclusion of this study, you may receive a report of the results upon request.

Please understand that your participation in this research is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw between January 1, 1994, and May 1, 1994. During this study you may remove any data related to you at any time before May 1, 1994. Also, please be aware that withdrawal does not constitute any penalty at any time.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Participant's Signature ___________________________ Date

Researcher's Signature ___________________________ Date

Researcher's Signature ___________________________ Date
APPENDIX C

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in this study. It is the primary goal of this project to empower past or present female GAIN participants, by offering them a forum in which their experiences and opinions may be heard concerning their participation in GAIN.

This study will be conducted from January 1994, and completed in June 1994. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, or if you would like the general results of this study, you may contact our faculty advisor at the following location:

Dr. Teresa Morris, Social Work Dept.
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397
Phone: (909) 880-5501

Further, if you experience problems from this study, the researchers can be contacted through the Social Work Department at California State University, San Bernardino (as noted above). Every effort will be made to connect you with any and all appropriate CSUSB campus or community services.

Sincerely,

Lori Lozano and Lori Richard
APPENDIX D

Questionnaire

1. How were you encouraged to participate in GAIN?

2. When you were first contacted to participate, how did you feel about the request to participate?

3. Describe your relationship with your GAIN Employment Specialist.

4. What was your input in setting up your GAIN contract?

5. What would have happened if you had declined services?

6. As you understood it, what would have happened if you had disagreed with your GAIN contract?

7. What were your first impressions of the GAIN program?

8. Considering your current GAIN status and progress, what are your impressions now of the GAIN program?

9. If you are or had been in the self-initiated program, (i.e., already involved in some kind of training program outside GAIN, like college, trade school, etc.), describe your feelings about how you were treated by the GAIN program. What services did you receive?
10. If you were not in the self-initiated program, describe how you were treated. What services did you receive?

11. Were your expectations met? Why? Why not?

12. How has your participation in GAIN helped you towards getting off AFDC?

13. Describe what things in GAIN were positive for you and what things were negative for you.

14. What changes would you like to see in the GAIN program?

15. In retrospect, would you participate in GAIN again? Why or why not?

Demographic Information

Age: _____  Monthly Income: ___________  Number of Children: ______

Age of Child(ren): ________________________________

Marital Status  single _____  married ____  domestic partner ____  separated ____
      divorced ____  widowed ____

Ethnicity: ____________________________________
Your participation on GAIN is/was: _____Mandatory  _____Voluntary

How many times have you been a GAIN participant? ________________

Was your GAIN Employment Specialist: ____Male  ____Female
What ethnicity was your GAIN Employment Specialist?
____________________________________________________________________

How often do/did you have contact with your GAIN Employment Specialist?
____________________________________________________________________

Who initiated contacts most often?
____________________________________________________________________

Do you have any disabilities? ________
Explain
disabilities:____________________________________________________________________

Do your children have any disabilities? ________
Explain your children's disabilities if any________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

How long have you been, or how long were you on AFDC? ________________

Why did you apply for AFDC?
____________________________________________________________________

Are you receiving AFDC now? ________ Full or partial benefits?____________________

Are you presently employed? _____ If so, how long employed?____________________
What are your current wages/salary? ____________________

What is your employment history? ____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Number of years of schooling? ______ Any degrees or training certificates? ________

List degrees and certificates received: _________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

On a rating scale from 1 to 5 (5 being the best rating), how would you rate the usefulness of GAIN? __________

Do you have any other family members who have in the past or are now receiving AFDC? ______________

Other Comments:
REFERENCES


