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FROM COUNTRYWOMAN TO FEDERAL EMERGENCY RELIEF ADMINISTRATOR: JOSEPHINE CHAPIN BROWN, A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

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This study documents the life and career of Josephine Chapin Brown, an early leader in public welfare and rural social work. Historical research showed that Brown's ideas on social work and on professional training for social work were often against the paradigm of her time. For example, Brown was a committed ruralite when social work was primarily urban; Brown supported social work training for public welfare workers in the agricultural colleges (many now state universities) when social work was committed to a more elitist training model. As a result she was ostracized by many of her influential contemporaries. Her orientation towards building coalitions with rural sociologists made her even less popular among her social work colleagues. In spite of Brown's many contributions to rural social work and public welfare, her life and works have remained undocumented by social work biographers. Because the battles she fought and lost are still current, a review of Brown's life history might not only be of historical interest but also enlighten contemporary debates.

Introduction

The life and work of Josephine Chapin Brown, born in Ogdensburg, New York, on October 20, 1887, has remained

undocumented in spite of her pioneering contributions to the fields of public welfare and rural social work.[1] Although Brown was a farmer, a researcher, a family welfare worker, a public figure and a fairly prolific author, one possible explanation for her relative obscurity in social work history lies in her own reserved personality. Yet, further examination of her life and career leads us to another hypothesis. Brown's ideas about levels of training for social workers were unorthodox and against the paradigm of her time. The record shows that powerful social work leaders, having disagreed with Brown on her training proposals and on her modus operandi during her tenure at the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), remained antagonistic toward her when the "relief crisis" was over. Yet, many of Brown's most controversial ideas such as the training of social workers for public welfare in the agricultural (state) colleges of the nation became a reality decades later with the advent of undergraduate social work education.

While the main objective of this manuscript is biographical, the politics of social work and social work training in the early days of the profession come clearly to the fore by following the wax and wane of Brown's professional career. History casts Brown as having entered a number of sensitive debates in the course of her career, often suffering personally for the political loses of certain themes. She was a ruralite at a time of ferment in that field; she was a generalist when specialization began to make its mark in social work and she continued to support a "democratized" model of training when the profession, having survived the Depression, became more elitist. Social work and social work education continue to be indicted even today for their abandonement of public welfare as a central concern. Brown's life work was devoted to creating a cadre of well trained rural and public welfare workers within the fiscal and political constraints of those two fields. Although she personally lost many of her battles, the issues are still pertinent and unresolved today. Her life story might provide some insights.

Youth and College Years

The daughter of Silas Edgar Brown (or Browne), a surgeon, and of Mary Chapin Bacon, Josephine Chapin Brown, received her early schooling at the Ogdensburg Free Academy and the Balliol School in Utica, New York. She attended Bryn Mawr College from 1906 to 1908 and then again from 1911 to 1913, graduating with an A.B. in Physics and Biology. Brown's course of study incluced Chemistry, Philosophy and Psychology, Latin, Greek and German (Bryn Mawr College Archives, 1920).

During her college years, Brown's family moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1908, Brown was forced to leave Bryn Mawr for two years due to financial difficulties (Bryn Mawr College Archives, 1914) during which time she taught Latin and Mathematics at the Oak Hall School for Girls in St. Paul, Minnesota. In June 1911, Brown was awarded the Thomas H. Powers Memorial scholarship enabling her to return for another year of studies at Bryn Mawr. In 1912, Bryn Mawr President M. Carey Thomas wrote to Brown letting her know that the college had received a scholarship gift "with the request that this scholarship be awarded to you as a token of admiration for your ability and character" (Bryn Mawr College Archives, 1912). At Bryn Mawr, Brown was considered an excellent student; she was older than most of the members of her graduating class and was held in high esteem by teachers and peers alike.

Bryn Mawr College enrollment records indicate that Brown was a Presbyterian. Her religious nature, highlighted in later years by her conversion to Catholicism, seemed apparent from an early point in her life. Soon after her graduation from Bryn Mawr, during 1913 and 1914, she worked as a Pastor's assistant at the House of Hope Church in St. Paul. To the biographer, Brown emerges as an upper-middle class woman who with great determination sought to confront her family's reverses of fortune and was successful in her quest.

In 1914, probably at the recommendation of the Dean of the College at Bryn Mawr, Brown secured a position as teacher of Greek and Social Problems at the Misses Shipley's

School in Bryn Mawr, a prestigious private academy. She did not, however, remain there for long. Brown manifested the restlessness and intolerance of monotonous routine characteristic of the early social reformers. In fact, in 1916, she wrote for her Bryn Mawr Class Bulletin: "I didn't write for the bulletin last year—probably because there wasn't anything interesting to write about teaching at a boarding school. Too many other people were doing the same thing." "Now," she stated in her 1916 letter, "I have something to write about" (Bryn Mawr College Archives, 1916).

By 1915, Brown had returned to Minnesota and begun work as a "substitute officer and teacher" at the Home School for Girls in Sauk Center, an institution for delinquent girls (Minnesota State Archives Collection, 1915–1916). Sauk Center was Brown's introduction not only to the helping field but to the rural environment that she would devotedly study and serve later in her life. Of that experience she wrote:

> Since August, I've been working for the State of Minnesota in the Home School for Girls. There are eight 'cottages' holding about two hundred girls between the ages of 8 and 18. They are sent here by the Juvenile Courts of the State for various offenses—and we are trying to send them out fitted to support themselves. Girl after girl has gone out to build or at least settle a home of her own . . . Because the school is in the country, there is a huge farm where the girls work in the spring and summer. Part of my job is to take them to the field, and I expect to spend many hours this spring grubbing in the earth and keeping them out of mischief at the same time (Bryn Mawr College Archives, 1916).

The Countrywoman

The rural revitalization that followed the work of Theodore Roosevelt's 1908 Country Life Commission spurred a back-to-the-land movement. The Commission had inspired a "country-life" campaign in the hope of returning the best leadership to the country (Swanson, 1972). At the end of 1913, Kenyon L. Butterfield, a renowned Massachusetts agriculturalist and member of the Commission wrote in the *Survey*: "The forces of the countryside are gathering for a

great forward looking movement. What shall the New Year bring us in our country-life campaign" (Butterfield, 1913:252). Apparently, Brown was caught in the fervor of this country-life campaign, the beginning of her evolving interest in the country. The year 1916 found her preparing for a farming venture.

Before embarking upon a project on an Idaho farm, Brown took the "Short Agricultural Course" at the University of Wisconsin. This was a course offered by Agricultural Extension, a service with which she would also show significant familiarity in later years. About this period she humorously wrote:

> The last year has been varied. An ambition to raise chickens put an end to my career at the Girls' Training School . . . It was a question not of loving my work at the School less—but of loving (?) chickens more! It was a hot summer in St. Paul, interrupted by a hotter three weeks at Madison, Wisconsin, where I tore from hens to cows and sometimes pigs—trying to prepare a little for a venture in farming. The Agricultural Short Course was most interesting. . . .
>
> On the first of October we started for Idaho—our worldly goods accompanying us on a freight car. My partner in this wild undertaking—is—for we are still going on—a Wellesley girl who lives in St. Paul—and who shares my longing for a cow, a few chickens and a garden. I somehow feel like Robinson Crusoe writing about it, for though we were not cast upon an island, it certainly was a desert. We were grateful for three ranges of mountains—but we longed for trees while we grubbed in the sage brush for firewood—climbed fences, pitched hay, milked our two cows, fed the chickens and the pigs and harvested the corn . . . We were eight miles out on forty acres—all irrigated land in the Boise Valley. We lived alone most of three months in the little cottage on the place—with a Winchester 22 leaning against the chimney in the living room. Not even a coyote nor a rabbit was the worse for that rifle . . . They must have smelled it!" (Bryn Mawr College Archives, 1917).

Brown's farming efforts in Idaho came to an end soon. In spite of their dedication, the two young "back-to-the-landers" found the Idaho environment hard to manage. Yet,

Brown learned to regard highly and appreciate the strengths and generosity of farm families. Her feelings are revealed in her comments about the unsuccessful Idaho venture:

> The country was full of charming people—and the air was wonderful—but we could not have the air and neighbors—and the ranch was too big for us to handle alone. We wanted something we could do ourselves—something smaller just for chickens and a cow. So at Christmas time we sold out what we could—packed the rest and came back to St. Paul, leaving the irrigation ditches which we had not purchased—to their fate. If any one is tempted to pity us on a lovely Christmas day—don't do it! We dined with the best of neighbors—whose names deserve to go down for posterity for their kindness to the 'boys who lived on that ranch.' The best is to come. These neighbors had nine children all the way from two to nineteen years old.! (Bryn Mawr College Archives, 1917).

Those early farm experiences were to serve Brown well. As a member of various social service organizations years later, and particularly at the Family Welfare Association (now Family Service Association of America, FSAA), she was often to call upon her experiences on the farm and with country families. Her expertise transcended the theoretical. She had, in fact, tried for quite a few years to make a living on the farm and knew first hand the demands and problems of the rural environment.

The onset of 1917 found Brown and her homesteading companion looking "for a farm near St. Paul" where they intended to make their "chicken business pay" (Bryn Mawr College Archives, 1917). Finally, they settled on a dairy farm in Marine, Minnesota, where they farmed until the year 1920. Years later, Brown would rely on her farming experiences in Marine to lend credence to her testimony when, as a social worker, she was asked to talk about rural needs. In 1930, for example, while staffing a project on rural social work research for the Social Science Research Council, Brown was invited to attend a meeting of the National Social Work Council where the "Social Needs of Village and Farm People" were being discussed. At that meeting, Brown said:

> My only claim to being heard at this time in talking about rural social needs is the fact that I feel I come before this group not as a social worker but as an ex-farmer. For several years . . . I was a hard working partner on a very small dairy farm in Minnesota, and having gone from that dairy farm to do case work in a very rural county, I learned to appreciate fully the value of my experience on that farm in learning what it meant, or some of the things it meant, to live in the country and do work in the country.
>
> For four years I milked cows twice a day, dug out straw stacks and carted hay and cleaned out barns, ran a separator and did house work, took care of chickens and pigs and ran a garden. There were just two of us working on this place and we did all the work inside and out of the house . . . I think of social workers, people who go to talk to rural people as to what they might to do improve the conditions under which they live, talk to them about their children who have perhaps gotten into difficulties or who aren't doing well in school, and I think the social workers who have only knowledge of city life who go to these people and talk to them in such terms, go to farmers wives who are working as we did from early morning until late at night, exhausting physical labor, I just wonder if their reaction isn't more than ours was one of aggravation that somebody who knows so little of what you are really up against when you live on a farm in the country should come in and try to talk how you can remedy some of your social needs (National Social Work Council, 1930:33–34).

Brown, the countrywoman, had little patience with social workers who spoke only theoretically about rural needs and issues.

Life as a Local Rural Worker

Whether the chicken business paid or didn't could not be clearly ascertained. In 1920, Brown took a position with the United Charities of St. Paul (now Family Service of St. Paul) as Visitor and District Secretary for South St. Paul. The United Charities was at that time engaged in providing relief to the poor, a function it continued until 1933. Whether Brown's responsibilities were solely urban or whether she

did rural visits could not be ascertained. Her district, however, must have been close to the farm where she had lived, an area of Washington County on the St. Croix River[2] between Minnesota and Wisconsin, for while working for the United Charities, she speaks of going back to the tiny little village of Marine, near her former farm, to experience the neighborliness of the folk.

Between 1921 and 1923, Brown served as Executive Secretary of the Dakota County Welfare Association still in Minnesota. At that time, the total population of Dakota County, located directly south of St. Paul was 29,000 people, with only two cities "so small that they would have been considered villages in the East" (Brown, 1922b:667). It was during those years in Dakota County that Brown began to forge her own thoughts about rural service delivery. Brown was convinced that rural helping was based on personal knowledge and understanding of the people involved; she always stressed that she had validated her rural theories by assessing them in light of the comments of her former neighbors and the recipients of her services.

During the 1920's and 1930's, when the enforcement of child labor laws for farm children was a major task of social workers, Brown, unlike other social workers, appreciated the circumstances that made farmers feel that all children should work and advised her colleagues on how to best approach the problem. During the same period, when the Country Life Movement was stressing farmers' participation in community activities as a way of promoting the welfare and improvement of farm people, Brown often advocated for country people, arguing that in spite of "social vision and consciousness", physical exhaustion and not lack of ambition curtailed the community involvement of the farmer and his wife (National Social Work Council, 1930:36). Above all, when city trained caseworkers stressed the merits of professionalized or formalized relationships, Brown provided a realistic perspective by highlighting the major components of a rural social worker: the ability to talk to rural folk in their own terms, to understand their unique conditions, to share with them their plights as a neighbor would, without

imposing on them external or highly intrusive solutions.

> You can't walk into a farmer's barnyard when he is working hard and just say right out to him, 'Now your children ought not to work so hard. Let them join this club and get some fun out of life.' You have got to know that man. He has got to know you. If you can go in there and get acquainted with him, if he knows you belong in that community for a long time, that maybe you have done some of the things he is doing, if you can look over his herd of cows and discuss with him their merits and demerits, the ones that are good milkers, if you can talk intelligently about his crops . . . if you can help him realize that you know the situation he is in . . . you stand a much better chance of persuading him to listen to you . . . (National Social Work Council, 1930:37–38).

Brown's advice, it should be noted, is still highly valid. Rural social work experts continue to emphasize the need to know the rural context, that is the many aspects of the rural milieu that affect service delivery. While current notions of rurality include more than agricultural areas and encompass, in fact, all non-metropolitan environments, it is still important for workers to possess the same general understanding of the rural environment and of the activities of rural people that Brown discussed in her days. The key to good rural practice continues to be the capacity of workers to establish and maintain open dialogues with rural clients.

> If it is a good thing for the City case worker to know her own community, I find it is essential for the rural workers. It is one of the steps she must take to become a part of her community. In a large city, she may go about from office to clients and back to her office without knowing much about or taking any particular part in the political, social or religious life of the city in which she is working; and this inactivity may not materially hinder the effectiveness of the work. In the country—quite the contrary is true. From county officials to clients—everyone I met at the beginning of my work considered me an outsider, and casework had to wait upon better acquaintance . . . (Brown, 1922:187).

During her years in Dakota County, Brown's thinking on rural practice and education was not only crystalized but

also disseminated, for in 1922, she shared her knowledge in published articles and presentations. She also attended and "distinguished herself as a member of Miss Richmond's Institute of Casework" (*Survey*, 1924:429) the famous summer gathering of charity organization leaders at the New York School of Philanthropy. The central theme of Brown's writing was always the adaptation of the principles of casework to the rural community. Brown emphasized the salience of environmental factors in the country, the importance of education and prevention as well as remediation, and the central role of what we now call "natural networks"—then volunteers—in the provision of services. In the "Use of Volunteers in Rural Social Work" Brown wrote that while in the city "the volunteer while desirable was optional", in the country, "the volunteer was a necessity" (Brown, 1922b:268). Further highlighting the importance of the work of local residents, Brown stated:

> In town the volunteer is on trial. In the country it is the social worker who is in that equivocal position. The city volunteer usually works in a district far from her own home and learns both method and facts regarding her case from the trained worker . . . but in the country the same trained worker may find that the volunteer has been a neighbor of her client for thirty years and knows more about his family history, and present situation than the average social worker . . . Often this information is accompanied by a definite theory of treatment which the neighborhood may have employed for years . . . (Brown, 1922b:268).

Brown concluded her observations stressing the social worker's need for an open mind, humility and "tact in abundance," advice which is still applicable and sound in rural areas.

A Decade at the Family Welfare Association and A Year at the Social Science Research Council

Toward the end of 1923, Brown moved from Minnesota to take the position of Associate Field Director in charge of eight Southeastern states at the Family Welfare Association

of America (FWAA). *The Survey* reported that the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work had recently appointed Josephine C. Brown as a field worker to work in Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina and to be based in Louisville, Kentucky (*Survey*, 1924:429). Unfortunately, although Brown worked for over a decade with the FWAA, no records of her activities there could be located. According to authoritative sources at FSAA, Brown's field service position included extensive travel and probably took her into member agencies providing consultation and support to local staff. Brown was clearly the FWAA's rural authority, for as we have already discussed, she spoke for the agency on rural matters at meetings of the Social Work Council. Furthermore, between 1929 and 1930, Brown was permitted to take a leave of absence from FWAA to act as Secretary of the Sub-Committee on Rural Social Work of the Committee on Social and Economic Research in Agriculture of the Social Science Research Council, a prestigious research organization based in New York City.

At the Social Science Research Council, Brown worked with some of the leading rural sociologists of the period, such as Benson Landis, Edmund de S. Bruner, Dwight Sanderson and others, and with the prominent figures involved in rural social work at the time, for example, Joanna Colcord of the Russell Sage Foundation, Gertrude Vaile of Minnesota and Emma D. Lundberg, Director of Research of the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration of New York State. While it can be said that those acquaintances served Brown well when she had to develop programs for the training of workers for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, her friendship with the rural sociology and agricultural college leadership made her the target of criticism from professionally overzealous social work colleagues who opposed coalitions with sociology and rural sociology as a threat to the still tenuous social work identity.[3]

During her year at the Social Science Research Council, Brown assisted in the production of a volume entitled *Research in Rural Social Work Scope and Method* (Black, 1932).

Three of the reports on the "state-of-the-art" were authored by Brown, who was listed on the volume's title page as the executive secretary of the Special Advisory Committee on Rural Social Work. The first report outlined rural social work as an area for research, listing methods such as case studies, analysis of case records, reports of social agencies, census reports and others as alternatives for investigators to consider. The second report evaluated the effectiveness of various county organizations in handling different types of rural social work. The recommendations of this report have an extraordinarily contemporary ring. Brown pointed out that in rural services many problems resulted from (a) organizations modeled in urban settings and superimposed in rural communities; (b) overzealous outside agencies eager to impose "mandatory laws"; (c) competition for limited local resources; (d) overworked rural social workers who then render sketchy services; (e) the stigmatization of social work as dealing only with "special" populations; and (f) little sharing of responsibility and poor use of local people. The third research report of the volume dealt with the training of rural case workers. Brown stressed the importance of utilizing the network of agricultural colleges to train as many workers as possible in the basics of social casework applicable to rural clients, underscoring environmental or community factors in casework interventions. As has already been noted, these ideas did not make Brown popular with many social work leaders of the more exclusive schools who supported specialized, graduate level education. Brown further expanded on the topics of these brief reports in *The Rural Community and Social Casework* (Brown, 1933).

After a year with the Social Science Research Council, Brown returned to the FWAA but must have spent more time at the headquarters in New York City, for between 1930 and 1932, she also taught two courses in Rural Social Problems at the New York School of Social Work. It is also known that Brown was for a while Acting Field Director and Membership Secretary at the FWAA.

The Rural Community and Social Case Work (Brown, 1933), a seminal work that was to guide rural social work for many

years appeared at the height of the Depression era. The book brought forth much controversy among social workers, for many controversial principles such as rural generalism were unequivocally stated. In the foreword, Emma O. Lundberg of the New York ERA, suggested that the lessons being learned through "the necessities of economical and humane relief administration" would make permanent impressions and that Brown's book would prove essential for a long term program.

Lundberg's words proved rather prophetic on at least two accounts. First, the states' temporary Emergency Relief Administrations (ERAs) provided the framework for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and for the establishment of a county-based system of public assistance, family social work and child welfare. Secondly, it was not only Brown's book that carried the rural social work message to remote county offices, but Brown herself, in her role as Administrative Assistant in the FERA and as the person in charge of the vast and ambitious training program for rural relief workers sponsored by this agency.

Other studies have looked in detail at the themes of *The Rural Community and Social Case Work*[4]fi Here suffice it to say that the book expounded upon Brown's farm experience and understanding of rural life, drew heavily from the works of the rural scholars of the time (N.L. Sims, K. L. Butterfield, C. J. Galpin and J. M. Williams) many of whom were personally known to Brown, and set forth Brown's proposals for a county-based, "undifferentiated" (generalist) program of rural casework that incorporated the worker's basic knowledge and empathy for rural life and his/her understanding of local rural leaders and resources. Brown foresaw rural needs as inevitably leading to the establishment of a public "casework" agency, but was not averse to utilizing a "private society" in the unusual county where one existed and could better lay the foundations for the public effort.

Much of the success of any social agency's program rested, according to Brown, upon the qualifications and experience of the workers. She advocated training that dealt specially with rural conditions; she believed that extensive

experience was required for employment in the rural counties: —a total of "three years as a minimum requirement and five years for the executive secretary" (Brown, 1933:72). Brown also felt that certain personality characteristics were a prerequisite for rural work:

> Case work in the average rural county must be done without the help of specialized social agencies and other resources which are usually available in a city. The rural worker, therefore, should have initiative and ingenuity in developing resources and in recognizing and using whatever facilities may be at hand.
>
> If she is to work in a satisfactory partnership with the people in the county, she should be willing to efface herself and let others take credit for the accomplishments in which she has had a share (Brown, 1933:70).

Brown's comprehensive and meticulous instructions to county workers made *The Rural Community and Social Casework* the target of both well-meaning and critical professional fun. In 1936, as the book was being widely circulated, a poem, "why i do not think i would make a good rural case worker" (Rettig, 1936:15) was published in *The Survey*. The social worker poet suggested that, having read Brown's book, she did not want to be a rural case worker "on account" of not claiming to be "a superwoman or a paragon."

In the Limelight: The FERA and WPA Years

On April 9, 1934, Brown became an Administrative Assistant at the FERA offices in Washington, D.C. There she worked with Harry Hopkins, Administrator and Aubrey Williams, Assistant Administrator. The Civilian Personnel Records files (National Personnel Records Center) indicate that she was appointed to that position at a salary of 6,000 per annum. Her status as a federal employee changed at various times as she moved from the FERA to the WPA in 1935, and later in 1939, when she became a "consultant" at the same agency.

Although Brown performed various functions at the FERA, it was the training of FERA workers that brought her

notoriety among her social work colleagues. Through its Division of Training and Research, FERA made available substantial sums of money for the training of relief workers in various states. Short-term institutes and seminars and intense supervision were used as instructional tools. But the most important FERA social work training project was probably the sending of selected workers for training courses to schools of social work across the nation. Brown's plan for the training of relief workers proposed to distribute available federal monies on the basis of "the need for training in various states" (Brown, 1934). Brown wanted to insure that the federal monies allocated for training did not "replace money from the state budgets which ordinarily would be spent for institutes and so forth" (Brown, 1934). She intended the FERA training program to be something additional.

The FERA training plan consisted of two parts: "(1) to make it possible for the state administrators to send a certain number of carefully selected people to schools of social work for a semester or a quarter; (2) to provide, in accordance with the needs of the state and probably on a regional basis, for planned institute programs" (Brown, 1934). This second component of the FERA training plan was, in contemporary language, a comprehensive in-service training program and involved, in some places, putting on the payroll of the state administration a "qualified teacher of case work" who devoted full time to planning and giving institutes, generally in one or two states. Institutes utilized the facilities of the state universities or other educational institutions, but were under the auspices of the various state relief administrations. It was through this second component of the FERA training program and by using resources within the states to improve the skills of local workers on the job that Brown hoped to meet the borad need for better prepared relief workers.

According to the records, the FERA training plan was carried out fairly close to Brown's original scheme. Interestingly enough, it was the long-term training component of the plan that brought forth the most severe criticisms.

Schools of social work that had not been selected to do long-term FERA training objected to the program and state politicians responding to their higher education constituencies also joined the critical chorus.

At the inception of the plan in 1934, Brown made it clear that the only schools that would participate in the FERA long-term training were those schools recognized by the American Association of Schools of Social Work (AASSW). On this matter, Brown wrote:

> There are in the country at least 60 educational institutions which claim to have schools of social work. I have no way myself of evaluating the kind of work being done. I know that some of the work is very poor. The American Association of Social Workers have a Committee on Relations with Schools of Social Work which is in despair over the task of evaluating the courses given in these institutions.
>
> The only way it seems possible to protect this office from the barrage of claims to consideration in this program is to limit the schools to which the students are sent to the members of the Association of Schools of Social Work. Even within this group, perhaps, there are schools which are not of very good quality and I want very much to get those schools to put on additional faculties and better facilities . . . If we go outside this membership we have no answer . . . (Brown, 1934).

Schools who were not members of the AASSW were only permitted to conduct short institutes for personnel within their states. As Brown had anticipated, the decision brought on a barrage of complaints, particularly from state institutions, most of which did not have schools of Social Work affiliated with the AASSW, but usually had departments of Sociology that offered social work courses (for example, Oklahoma and Utah). From a biographer's perspective, Brown's decision to include in the FERA long-term training program only the more established and exclusive AASW member schools was dissonant with her own ideas and commitments to the rural field and with her previously sympathetic stance on the land-grant institutions and the agricultural colleges. The schools approved by the AASSW

tended to be private and located in the large urban centers of the East Coast and the Mid-West, although as time went by, other less urban schools were accepted into membership by the AASSW. In this instance, it would appear that Brown's decision reflected more a pragmatic administrative judgement call than her personal commitments. But, in spite of this, as is the case with important decisions, the matter was not laid to rest for many years and those who initially benefitted from Brown's judgement became her bitter critics later on.

After the emergency period passed, Brown drew severe criticism from some prominent members of the AASSW when she apparently suggested that training for public welfare workers could be expanded to include the state universities and agricultural colleges of the nation. At that time, prominent social work leaders severely criticized Brown's proposal insinuating that it constituted "normal school training" for social workers and "the starting of state university schools of social work wholesale" (Wisner, 1937). Elizabeth Wisner of Tulane wrote to Edith Abbott of Chicago:

> As to Miss Brown's plan, I was inadvertently drawn into a discussion of her statement during a brief conference with Miss Lenroot.[5] In August, Miss Lenroot wrote me that Miss Brown was making a special study of education for her and asked if I could see her in New Orleans. We had a very general discussion and I left the conference feeling very vague as to the study. . . .
>
> During my conference with Miss Lenroot, she asked me to read Miss Brown's memorandum, a copy of which had been forwarded to Miss Breckinridge but which I had never seen and did not have an opportunity to read carefully. One section caught my eye and it was the one referring to the agricultural colleges, etc. I pointed out to Miss Lenroot that Miss Brown had in an earlier study, made in cooperation with Mr. Carstens and various other people (for the purpose I believe, of submitting some kind of application to the Social Science Research Council), emphasized the importance of the agricultural colleges in rural training, home economics, etc., and that

> I knew people had been critical of this study and that in my opinion a repetition of that kind of a recommendation would be most unfortunate.
> The only other point discussed at any length was in a later conference with Miss Van Driel present. She had, of course, been furnished with a copy of Miss Brown's memorandum and had time to thoroughly consider it. She felt very strongly that Miss Brown was proposing "normal school training," as she expressed it, and argued most effectively against any such plan. I thought it was most fortunate that she was there to discuss the memorandum with Miss Lenroot and I certainly agreed with what she said. On my return to New Orleans, I commented . . . on the dangers of having Miss Brown formulate educational memos . . . (Wisner, 1937).

Eidth Abbott, whose school at the University of Chicago had received many FERA students, joined in the criticism of Brown's attempts to broaden social work training beyond a few major universities. In a letter written in 1937, Abbott commented that she considered "very dangerous and unsound" the plan Brown was working on. She added, "of course, her only experience is with an emergency program and both she and Katherine (presumably Lenroot) think you can start a new school over night in every state university and turn out social workers wholesale" (Abbott, 1937).

History showed that the controversy over the provision of training for public welfare workers particularly in rural states which began circa 1935[6] culminated with the establishment of a second accrediting body for social work education, the National Association of Schools of Social Administration (NASSA) in 1942, separate from the AASSW (Martinez-Brawley, 1981; Leighninger, 1984). For a decade, the NASSA accredited mostly the land-grant universities and agricultural colleges in their efforts to establish social work training outside the large metropolitan centers.

Clearly, becoming involved in the controversy over levels and type of training appropriate for rural and public welfare workers was one of the most problematic aspects of Brown's professional career, for she made enemies among influential social work leaders who apparently ostracized her professionally after the FERA years. Although the records of

the AASSW do not contain any other substantial references to Brown's activities beyond 1937, the University of Chicago files in the CSWE collection at the University of Minnesota contain further references to Brown's unpopular stance on the issue of training for public welfare work. As late as 1943, Edith Abbott was asked by Leona Massoth, then secretary of the AASSW, to comment on a manuscript by Brown entitled "The Professional Education and Experience of Federal Emergency Relief Administration Scholarship Students" (Massoth, 1943). Abbott refused to even consider the manuscript for publication in the *Social Service Review* commenting that "her relations with Miss Brown" had "already been so acrimonious" over disagreements on the FERA training that she (Abbott) thought it best "not to see the material and reject it" (Abbott, 1943). In relation to publication of the manuscript by the AASSW, Abbott further commented to secretary Massoth: "I should certainly think it would be wicked to put any money into such a publication. It might be worth mimeographing, but I would think that would be the most that should be done" (Abbott, 1943). Whether Abbott was correct or incorrect in her assessment of Brown's manuscript is irrelevant here. What is important to note is that Brown paid dearly for her unorthodoxy regarding training issues.

There is no question, however, that Brown's endeavors helped develop a cadre of social workers for the provision of relief. In 1935, Brown reported to the National Conference of Social Work that the FERA's "greatest venture had been its popularly known training program in which . . . through special grants of money, 39 states secured for a number of their present and prospective staff members, training opportunities of one-half year each at accredited schools of social work" (Brown, 1935:236). Brown reported that 912 students had attended, in one year alone, more than 21 schools and that over half of them were planning to go back to school to finish their graduate degrees. While by-and-large the training was rated highly by the students, Brown discovered that many programs focused entirely on city problems with no reference to rural problems ever made. Additionally, as a

pragmatist, Brown was concerned with the gaps that existed between the theory taught in the schools and the realities of practice.

> There is not only a gap between urban teaching and rural experience but between the old social casework and what it has to give us which can be applied to the administration of unemployment relief. There is also a gap between the entire content of social work training as we have known it and the practical, growing, vital needs of the new public welfare . . . (Brown, 1935:236–37).

It may have been that because of the lack of relevancy that many training courses had for rural workers, Brown became involved and circulated the "unpopular" training plan to which Wisner and Abbott referred. Unfortunately, more details of this plan were not found in any of the records searched although, as late as 1943, Abbott was still making reference to her role in putting a stop to "many of the very foolish things that Harry (presumably Hopkins) and Miss Brown were planning to do and in fact had already begun to do in some places" (Abbott, 1943).

In 1936, Brown once again addressed the National Conference of Social Work to provide a synopsis of the relief situation on the dawn of the passage of the Social Security Act. Brown suggested that although the major objective of the FERA had been the provision of unemployment relief, "at the same time every possible encouragement had been given to the development of permanent programs of public welfare and public assistance" (Brown, 1936:428). Under the FERA, she said, the pendulum had swung far in the direction of federal control" (Brown, 1936:431). She acknowledged the fact that with the advent of the Social Security Act, many social workers had seen "with intense regret the responsibility for public welfare and public assistance placed upon the states and localities" (Brown, 1936:432). But she was hopeful that the improvements established under the FERA would continue under local auspices, and asked for social work cooperation on these efforts:

> Permanent public welfare programs must be indigenous. They must strike deep roots in the understanding and support of

> private citizens and public officials. They must be wanted if they are to endure. . . .
>
> In the states the efforts of social workers are badly needed to back existing welfare departments as they work for high standards of personnel and relief; to promote sound public welfare legislation . . . to secure adequate state appropriations for the social security categories and for general public assistance (Brown, 1936:432).

Thus, in spite of her experience as a federal administrator and her doubts about the resources of many local communities, Brown continued to believe in rural social work practice that capitalized upon local resources and had the potential for being responsive to the unique conditions of the various states. Her beliefs, however, never obscured her perceptions of reality, for in 1939, she wrote that in spite of the FERA structure, and probably because "local boards and committees and other devices for the encouragement of local participation and understanding" had not been used intensively enough under FERA" (Brown, 1940:325) a public welfare program had not taken root in local communities. She further observed:

> The period of transition, after the liquidation of the FERA at the end of 1935, stands out as a time of confusion and near chaos in public relief. It was a time of uncertainty, insecurity and even terror for the relief client who could not get a work relief job and who had no sure niche in the developing categorical programs. Suffering was acute in too many sections of the country. Funds for general relief were inadequate or entirely lacking in state after state (Brown, 1940:325).

By the end of 1937, Josephine C. Brown's activities within the WPA changed in nature. A humorous note appearing in *The Survey* (*Survey*, 1937) remarked that everyone had thought she had resigned from the WPA in favor of a long vacation, but that in fact she had only gone to Europe briefly and had returned to her WPA desk to do a special job of research and writing. Her Civilian Personnel Records indicate a code change in 1937 and a void furlough in 1939.

She retained the status of "consultant" until her terminatior in 1943.

In a vita Brown prepared for Catholic University (National Catholic School of Social Service Archives) Brown states that between 1937 and 1939, she carried out a study of public relief for the publication of a book. Her second book, *Public Relief 1929–1939* which appeared in 1940 was dedicated to the "regional social workers of the FERA and WPA, in recognition of their distinguished contribution to public welfare in the United States." In this volume, Brown undertook the monumental task of explaining and documenting the states' relief situation prior to the establishment of the FERA in 1933, the purposes and workings of the FERA, the transition to state-relief systems, (with the WPA taking responsibility for the able-bodied unemployed) and the establishment of state systems under the Social Security Act.

Throughout the volume she reveals and documents Harry Hopkins' commitment to retain the best staff of the FERA and to insure that the state administrations and the WPA availed themselves of the best trained personnel. This however, did not always happen in spite of Washington's memoranda, for, "as a matter of fact, several states promptly effected a complete liquidation of their Emergency Relief Administrations with no immediate provision for another agency to administer relief. The social work staffs were allowed to scatter and the public welfare departments which were set up later found it necessary to start all over again with new personnel (Brown, 1940:318).

Brown's public relief volume was a major contribution to the public welfare literature. In her ending paragraphs, Brown best summarizes the accomplishments of an era:

> Government relief rather than private relief has become a matter of course. In 1929, private relief loomed large in the consciousness of the socially-minded citizen . . . At present all but one percent of the huge total comes from public treasuries. Equally axiomatic is the practice of making public agencies responsible for the administration of public funds (Brown, 1940:424).

Brown also dealt with what a decade of efforts in the public relief field failed to accomplish:

> Outside the inadequacies and inequalities of relief benefits, the most serious problem in public welfare today is found in the multiplicity of agencies, of categories, of standards, of methods of intake and of definitions of eligibility. The local confusion resulting from this complexity has serious implications for agency staffs and for the recipients . . . Next in importance to supplying Federal grants for general relief, and an equalization system for all of the Federal grants to the states, is the provision of a planned coordinated and integrated program, Federal, state, and some approach to equality of treatment of all persons in need who apply for public aid (Brown, 1940:424).

These statements were written by Brown in 1940 but retain a contemporary ring nearly five decades later.

The War Years: Life as an Educator

Although Brown had always been concerned about the training of social workers, concentrating first on the needs of rural areas and later on the needs of the public welfare field, she never held a permanent academic position until 1939, when she was appointed at the rank of Instructor at the Catholic University School of Social Work in Washington, D.C. According to her vita, Brown had taught courses in rural social work at the New York School of Social Work during the years at the FWAA, but they must have been of short duration for no records on Brown's tenure there could be secured.

Brown's connection with Catholic education pre-dated her appointment at Catholic University. At some point during the thirties, she had converted to Catholicism. The details of her conversion could not be reconstructed, but according to one of her colleagues at Catholic University, she devoted much time to religiously sponsored helping activities, having at some point become a Benedictine oblate, that is, a member of a lay organizations which followed the teachings of St. Benedict and met regularly at St. Anselm Abbey in Washington, D.C. (Mohler, 1938). Her conversion

to Catholicism was also corroborated in a memorial address given by a friend after Brown's death in Princeton, New Jersey (Cuyler, 1977).

As early as 1936, Brown had addressed a forum at the School of Social Work at Catholic University speaking on the relationship of government and social work and carefully explaining the role of both the voluntary and the public sectors in the provision of services (Brown, 1936b). Brown believed that social work had made an indelible mark in the provision of emergency relief. Brown was cognizant of the fact that most social workers employed by the FERA had come from the private sector but was emphatic in stating the need for those social workers to understand that the conception of social work in a private agency was not always applicable to the large public agency. Brown acknowledged the importance of politics in both the private and the public fields, although she humorously conveyed her awareness that at least at the time, it was only in the public sector that social workers dared acknowledge the effects of political activity. As it can easily be seen, much of Brown's thinking was ahead of her time.

Brown's connections with the Catholic University School of Social Service were formalized in 1939. Brown's expertise were the areas of rural relief and public welfare, and she stated that in her letter of application to the school. It is reported that she taught courses at the two Catholic social work institutions which existed in Washington, D.C., at the time, the Catholic University School of Social Work and the National Catholic School of Social Service (Mohler, 1983). Eventually in 1947, before Brown's retirement, the two institutions would merge into today's National Catholic School of Social Service, The Catholic University of America. During her tenure at The National Catholic School of Social Service, Brown was in charge of the Public Welfare Sequence, served as Secretary of the faculty, and as Director of Admissions.

Records at the National Catholic School of Social Service do not indicate that any special consideration had been

given in terms of academic rank or teaching load to the broad spectrum of expertise Brown had brought to the faculty. One of Brown's colleagues recalls that Brown carried quite a heavy teaching load and that few if any of her contemporaries were aware of the stature Brown had enjoyed in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Brown's humble and unpretentious ways would have underplayed her former accomplishments and stressed comraderie as a member of the faculty. She was seen as a rather quiet and reserved person.

During the War years, Brown became very active in a variety of war related efforts. On September 1, 1943, she was appointed by the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia to the Civilian War Services Board of the Civilian War Services Division. Apparently, the Dean of the School of Social Work considered Brown's participation in this time-consuming endeavor one of the contributions the School could make to the war effort (Brown, undated). One of her main assignments as a member of the Board was to serve on the Child Care and Protection Committee and on the Family Security Committee. The first was responsible for functioning on an advisory capacity to directors of nursery services and the second provided a unique service to draftees and their families known as the Draft Aid Center.

During the War, Brown also served on the Citizen's Committee on Day Care Services which tried to secure public funds in the District of Columbia to provide day care programs for children of working mothers. This committee was unsuccessful in those efforts and eventually established the Foster Day Care and Counselling Association, a private agency funded by the Washington Community Chest to carry out those duties. The Foster Day Care and Counselling Association was continued beyond the war years.

Because of these activities, Brown became very involved in day care issues and made frequent public appearances representing the School of Social Service. She spoke authoritatively of her concern for the children of working mothers: "Women in war industries," she stated, "should be

recruited from those with no children or those with children above school age" (*Richmond News Leader,* 1942). "War-Working Mothers Asked to Stay Home With Children," a headline in *The Richmond News Leader* read after one of Brown's talks. Brown declared her beliefs to be consistent with the policies of the War Manpower Commission and the Children's Bureau.

We have come to recognize that as members of the labor force women of present generations owe many of their gains to those who answered the call of employers during the war. Given Brown's progressive ideas in most areas, her opposition to working mothers during the war appears incongruous. It must be realized, however, that Brown always weighed her decisions carefully and acted not so much on ideological grounds as on pragmatic but careful assessments of specific situations. For whatever reasons, Brown believed that social workers should counsel mothers of young children against war-related employment. Yet, she also advocated that good day care provisions had to be made for the care of the children of those mothers who decided to work in spite of contrary advice. As a social worker, Brown was very involved in the making of those provisions.

During the War years, Brown also became concerned about the issue of mass economic insecurity of all workers. She did considerable public speaking and writing,[7] primarily to Catholic audiences, criticizing the way in which the United States economy fostered insecurity among working people.

> Throughout the past century periodic industrial depressions were taken for granted—as well as the existence of a state of economic insecurity in the lives of most, if not all, working people.
>
> The framework within which all these problems have developed is an economic system which operates on the theory that any individual has unlimited freedom and absolute right to use capital for profit regardless of the welfare of others. In this system, human rights and welfare are made subservient to the interest of trade. The successful man has a right to all

> his profits, however large they may be, regardless of the needs or interest of others.
>
> As a result of this system our economic machinery has become man's master instead of his servant. The worker's employment and economic advancement are not relative to the real value of his services but to the extent to which his employer can profit by his enterprise (Brown, 1942:10).

Finally, a third theme that preoccupied Brown during the years of the war was the relationship between private charity and governmental relief activity. She had clearly expressed her commitment to the role of government in relief during the depression years and had repeatedly stated the role of organized charities and private citizens in welfare work. As her thinking matured, and as she distanced herself from public life, she continued to examine the relationship between the voluntary and public sectors and to interpret the need for cooperation and discernment on their respective responsibilities. It must be remembered that this was a controversial issue for social workers even after the passage of the Social Security Act. "Because the needs of millions of people is too great to be met by the resources of private citizens and charitable organizations," Brown wrote in 1942, "it is the duty of the state to make provisions for them, in addition to instituting regulatory measures looking to the securing of the rights of the workers and the reform of the system itself" (Brown, 1942:10). The cooperation between citizens, private agencies and government was essential, Brown thought, although it had often been endangered by the attitude of the first two, failing to realize their close and inevitable alliance with public interests.

In the midst of all this activity, Brown earned a Master of Arts in Sociology from the Catholic University in 1945 and was promoted to the rank of Assistant Professor at the School of Social Service. Finally, in 1951, shortly before her retirement, she was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.

During her years at the Catholic University of America,

Brown discovered that her eyesight was failing due to cataracts and glaucoma. In July 1952, she tendered her resignation from the faculty, announcing her retirement to the city of Princeton.

Her Retirement and Death

Little could be ascertained about the final years of Brown's life in Princeton. For the most part, she lived a quiet existence, centered around religious activities. Probably due to her severely failing eyesight, she did not participate actively in professional organizations any more, although the membership register of NASW continued to list her until 1977. She apparently maintained her long-time professional association and friendship with Katherine Lenroot, former chief of the Children's Bureau, who had also retired to Princeton.[8]

According to a friend sho knew and read to Brown as her eyesight progressively worsened, Brown remained a quiet and contented person until the time of her death. She seldom spoke of her past professional life and her requests were simple and brief. She enjoyed being read to, and her favorite books and "those about the St. Lawrence River which flowed by her native town of Ogdensburg, or else books about Eleanor Roosevelt with whom she had done social service work in Washington" (Cuyler, 1977). Brown's fervent Catholicism remained strong until her death; yet, her religious practices were very ecumenical in nature, before ecumenism was popular. She walked to mass at the Aquinas Chapel in Princeton for as long as she could, although she had to cross a busy intersection. She was also a member of Trinity Church Episcopalian Intercessor's Group, through which prayer were said at home for the needy all over the world.

Josephine Brown died in Princeton, New Jersey on October 25, 1976, four days after her 90th birthday.

Summary and Conclusions

Biography serves not only to reconstruct the lives of the prominent but also to help us interpret our own actions and

make us cognizant that the vested interests of today can and do, indeed, shape the future. Josephine Chapin Brown was one of many women pioneers who embraced causes ahead of her times and was sometimes subtly and sometimes overtly chastized by her peers. Interestingly enough, Brown would have probably not seen herself as a champion of causes but rather as a pragmatist doing what needed to be done with as much common sense as could be mustered. Brown's offending key figures in social work was probably unintentional; her embracing ways of thinking that turned out to be more democratic than those espoused by her social work contemporaries was probably also coincidental. Brown's experiences were quite different from those of her contemporary colleagues and her actions were shaped by those experiences. Brown's sense of professionalism was more open, more interdisciplinary, more secure in many ways than that of her colleagues. At a time when social work rigidly insisted on graduate training, Brown saw that jobs in the country (and even in the cities) were opening up for those without any training at all. She tried to impose a measure of realism onto the professional paradigm but became unpopular for daring to do so. For those committed to innovation in the professions, the price Brown paid for her unconventional thinking well illustrates that threats to the paradigm in academic disciplines or professions are not viewed benenvolently, and even if eventually the new challenges are accepted, their initiators often fall into obscurity. It has taken many decades for the profession to hear about, if not recognize, the merits of Brown's challenges and contributions.

1. This manuscript is based on a laborious reconstruction of Brown's life which began with the perusal of *The Survey* pages and lasted over three years. The search extended to records in the Social Welfare History Archives of the University of Minnesota, the Archives of the Catholic University of America, the Bryn Mawr Archives, the National Archives at the Library of Congress and the Katherine Lenroot Collection at Columbia University. ginterviews with Dorothy Mohler, a former colleague of Brown's at Catholic University, provided additional valuable

information. The memories of a former secretary of Brown at Catholic University provided clues as to the place of her retirement and death, and finally, correspondence with Marjorie Cuyler of Princeton, a friend of Brown during the final years of her life, helped supplement the written record and corroborate this researcher's inferences about Brown's personal style and attributes.

2. The Minutes of the National Social Work Council meeting of March 7, 1930, list the river as St. Cloud. This might be a typographical error since the village of Marine is on the St. Croix River.
3. Enlightening in this regard, is for example, a letter written by Elizabeth Wisner of Tulane to Edith Abbott of the University of Chicago, November 3, 1937. Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, CSWE Collection, AASSW Series.
4. See for example, Martinez-Brawley, Emilia E. *Pioneer Efforts in Rural Social Welfare,* (Penn State Press, 1980) and *Seven Decades of Rural Social Work,* (Praeger, 1981); see also Davenport, Joseph and Judith, "Josephine Brown's *The Rural Community and Social Case Work:* A Golden Anniversary Perspective" (paper presented at the 8th National Institute of Social Work in Rural Areas, Cheney, WA., 1983).
5. Katherine Lenroot was Chief of the Children's Bureau between 1934 and 1951.
6. Correspondence in the FERA/WPA files in the National Archives showed that as early as 1935 Brown had been involved in discussing social work training for the rural field vs. training in home economics with the staff ot eh Georgia Relief Administration (Wilma Van Dusseldorp and Alan Johnstone). Brown had remained strong in emphasizing the importance of social work training for rural services. Yet it was clear that politically, from where she sat, she could not disregard the contributions of other helping disciplines which like home-economics had a long-standing association with agriculture.
7. See, for example, "Social Duties Rest on All," *The Richmond News Leader,* Tuesday, November 10, 1942.
8. In 1968, on the occasion of an anniversary celebration at the National Catholic School of Social Service, Brown declined an invitation to the celebration on her behalf and that of Katherine Lenroot. Letter from Josephine Brown to Dean Ferris, March 31, 1968, National Catholic School of Social Service Archives, The Catholic University of America.

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