

Distributing the Social Service Budget:
Population Characteristics and the Extent of Demand
on Social Service Resources

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ABSTRACT

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This is a pilot study of the relationship between certain demographic and socio-economic population characteristics, and the extent of clients' demands on the resources of a social service agency. The objective is to test an assumed association between population characteristics and demand on public social service resources.

Secondary data collected on the clientele and service delivery of one Montreal agency were used ($N = 3,477$). The analysis was carried out using multiple regression, with a series of independent variables including ethnicity, age, family type, living arrangement and several measures of SES. Controls were introduced at various points for sex, language, religion and the type problems presented by the client. The dependent variable of demand on resources was measured along three dimensions: case complexity, amount of time the case remained open, and the number of times a case was reopened.

The findings indicated that the only characteristic demonstrating consistently significant effects on demand on resources was SES, but that the extent of this effect was

extremely weak. The effects of age were inconsistent, and in some equations, not in the expected direction. Living alone and being a member of single parent family were also shown to have inconsistent effects, while ethnicity appeared to have no significant effect at all. Overall, population characteristics explain only a minute amount of the variance in demand on resources. The type of problem presented by the clients, on the other hand, explained a large proportion of the variance in demand, but had only a slight effect on the demographic and socio-economic variables.

The conclusion drawn is that there is reason to question further the assumed relationship between population characteristics and demand on social service resources.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES vii

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. LITERATURE REVIEW 5

 The Definition of Need 9

 Social Indicators 16

 Social Problems and a Theory of Need 19

III. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM 32

IV. METHODOLOGY 38

 The Data Base 39

 The Dependent Variables 43

 The Independent Variables 48

 Controlling for Problems 57

 Validity 60

V. FINDINGS 63

 Demand in terms of Case Complexity 63

 Demand in terms of Duration of the Case 71

 Demand in terms of Repeated Case Openings 75

VI. INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS 79

APPENDIX 97

REFERENCES 105

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE I: Factor Analysis of Dependent Variables46

TABLE II: Distribution of Clients by Annual
Personal Income 56

TABLE III: Independent Variables, their Frequency
Distribution, and Expected Direction of
Association with Extent of Demand on
Resources 57

TABLE IV: Number of Problems Assessed in Relation
to Demographic and Socio-economic
Characteristics of Client 64

TABLE V: Amount of Time Case Remains Open in
Relation to Demographic and Socio-economic
Characteristics of Client 73

TABLE VI: Number of Previous Case Openings in
Relation to Demographic and Socio-economic
Characteristics of Client 77

INTRODUCTION

Social service policy in Quebec has undergone innovative and rapid change over the last ten years, with the creation of a social service network which is both unique in North America, and theoretically progressive. It is based on the principle of universal and equal access to services at the community level - an approach which enjoys a high degree of respect amongst experts in the field of social policy. However, in the face of the rapid implementation of this sweeping policy, research has barely been able to keep up with the requirements of province-wide planning and administration.

This thesis examines recently available data on the clientele of one Social Service Centre in the city of Montreal. The question addressed is: "To what extent are client characteristics associated with the extent of demand on the resources of a social service agency?" The question is raised within the context of Quebec's established social service policy and the territorial organization of service delivery. It stems from a current controversy within the social service network with respect to the distribution of resources between agencies which share in a regional social service budget.

Proposals for a model of resource distribution between public social service agencies have so far been guided by comparative studies of the populations within each existing agency's territory. These proposals make assumptions about an agency's resource requirements on the basis of the demographic and socio-economic distribution of individuals within its territorial population. For example, it is assumed that a population identified as being of low socio-economic status will have greater social service needs than one of high socio-economic status, and that the agency serving such a population would therefore require more resources than others. This study provides an indirect critique of these assumptions. A major objective is to show that population characteristics in and of themselves do not provide a valid rationale for resource distribution.

Furthermore, not all those who become clients make equal demands on resources. The social service centres provide a wide variety of services ranging from referrals to the continuous monitoring of particularly vulnerable clients. Some clients require little more than a few meetings with a social worker, while others require the mobilization of numerous additional resources, such as home care or foster care.

According to current proposals for a resource distribution model, factors related to increased demand on resources are reduced to certain demographic and/or socio-economic characteristics of the population from which an agency's clientele is drawn. The possibility of such a strategy rests on the theoretical premise that the relationship between population characteristics and demand on resources is reflected within the sphere of the agency itself. Were this not the case, there would be no basis in the proposals for suggesting that some agencies require more or less resources than they are presently receiving.

The recent availability of data regarding social service clients and patterns of service delivery, provides the opportunity to question the above mentioned assumptions. It is now possible to examine the relationship between client characteristics and the extent of clients' demands on the services of a particular Social Service Centre. While these data are not sufficient to conduct a critical test of the validity of the assumptions, they do permit a pilot study of their empirical foundation.

Following a discussion of the context within which this particular issue has become significant, I review the

literature and research, which currently influences proposals for resource distribution. In an elaboration of the theoretical framework, current assumptions are criticized, and the testing of these assumptions is suggested through an analysis of agency clientele. A study is carried out, examining the relationship between demographic and socio-economic characteristics of clients and the extent of their demands on social service resources. The results demonstrate a very weak relationship, which is interpreted as putting some aspects of the current assumptions into question.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quebec research in the area of social services has concentrated on numerous themes. These include program evaluation, inter- and intra-agency organization, population characteristics and the needs of particular population sectors. However, there is no evidence of any effort on the part of researchers to develop a systematic model for resource distribution for Quebec's Social Service Centres.

Most literature directly related to the question of resource distribution for public social services has addressed the issue at the level of policy formation. The British system has usually provided the context for these discussions, where social services have been under the auspices of the state for some time. One of the major problems in relating this literature to the specific problem of inter-agency resource allocation is that it focuses more on questions of philosophy and policy, and the consequences thereof, than it does on planning and administration. The basic tenets of Quebec's social service policy are not at issue here, but rather the means

of achieving them.

Quebec's social service policy rests on two basic premises. The first of these is "equality of provision": This implies that every individual has access to similar and equal services, regardless of where they may reside in the province. The implementation of such a policy has led to the development of a territorially structured social service network, with a Social Service Centre and, more recently, Local Community Service Centres located in each territory. The Social Service Centres are staffed by social workers, and provide specified services to each territory within the network, including youth and childrens' services, marital, family and individual counselling, hospital social services, and homecare and placement services for the disabled and elderly.

The second premise on which social service policy is

1. The role of the Social Service Centre, as opposed to the Local Community Service Centre, is less than clear, and under current revision. At this point, the "mission" of the Social Service Centre is described as providing specialized services for those facing difficulties in social functioning, including consultation, psycho-social treatment, adoption, the placement of children and the elderly, and other preventative and adaptive services. The Local Community Service Centres, on the other hand, provide "front line" services in the community, including counselling and referrals (l'association des centres de services sociaux du Quebec, 1976).

based is "universality". Personal social services are available free of charge to any individual or family seeking them, or referred to them by a medical professional or law enforcement agent, regardless of age, means or other limitations. This aspect of the policy suggests that services are not strictly targeted for pre-defined sectors of the population.

Within the context of such a policy, the development of a model for distributing the social service budget between agencies has become a controversial issue, and one which cannot be solved on the basis of precedent. The question that must be answered by such a model is this: "After taking into consideration differences in the size of the population of each agency's territory, can it be assumed that all agencies will have an equal demand placed on their resources?" If the provision of social services were tied to means tests, or to some other measurable standard, then predictions with respect to the extent of resource demands in each territory might be possible. With the standard of provision being "equality" and "universality", however, such predictions become much more difficult.

In the absence of clear guidelines built into the policy itself, discussions with respect to the territorial

distribution of resources have revolved around the question of relative needs. The argument is that if it can be shown that the population of one territory is likely to have a greater need for social services than the population of another territory, then the agency in that territory will require a greater proportion of available resources to serve its population equitably. The acknowledged standard is the relative extent of need.

One source of this argument lies with the Ministry of Social Affairs. According to the Ministry, in light of absolute limits to the availability of resources for social services, the social service network cannot respond to all demands: it must therefore seek to satisfy the "most urgent needs" of the population (M.A.S. 1980). Thus the stage is set for attempting to identify which territorial population has the "most urgent needs". And as there is no immanent standard for resource distribution in the policy itself, the vague concept of relative population needs presents itself.

However, as the following discussion will demonstrate, the identification and measurement of the relative needs of populations is not a simple matter. Current proposals for a model of territorial resource distribution suggest indicators of need based on certain population

characteristics. Socio-economic status is the preferred criterion. It is argued that the poor are the most socially vulnerable, and therefore have the greatest need for social services. Populations identified as being of low socio-economic status will consequently make the greatest demands on the resources of a social service agency, and the agency serving such a population will require a greater proportion of available resources.

There is a strong resemblance between this logic and the logic at the basis of an entirely different social service policy, one that identifies its target populations by setting means tests. However, in the context of the existing "universalist" policy, it bears critical examination. Since the foundation of the argument lies in identifying relative needs, one of the first steps is to define the concept of need.

The Definition of Need

Within the social work and social policy literature, the question of needs has most often been interpreted in terms of particular target groups, such as the elderly (e.g. Hayman & Polansky, 1977; Therrien & Bouchard, 1983) or children at risk (e.g. Group de Recherche sur l'Inadaption Juvenile, 1981; Demers, 1982). The research

interests guiding these works lie in explicating the constellations of needs associated with each particular group, and in developing programs and modes of intervention that will meet those needs. But such studies do not contribute to our understanding of the relative distribution of needs throughout a heterogeneous population.

The question of relative needs has received considerably less attention than the question of specific needs. Where it has been addressed, however, the term "needs" has caused considerable controversy. Due to a lack of theoretical consensus regarding the concept, it usually escapes definition altogether (Bradshaw, 1972; Forder, 1974; Smith, 1980). Even a single study can move confusingly between discussions of "need", "apparent need", "perception of these needs", "judgements about needs", the "needs of areas", and "need-creating circumstances" (e.g. Davies, 1968), while others may refer to "community needs" (Geismar, 1980), "basic needs" (Thursz & Vigilante, 1975), as well as "vulnerability" (Glaser & Renaud, 1981), "populations at risk" (Prudhomme, 1980; Neuber, 1980), and "clients' interests" (Mayer and Timms, 1970). All of these studies implicitly refer to needs. As Scrivens (1982) points out, there is a "curious overlap" of concepts of need, which is rarely made explicit in the literature.

Despite theoretical confusion, meeting social needs is held to be the objective of the social services, and as such, the concept of need cannot be ignored. Bradshaw (1972) has provided a succinct overview of various meanings by which the concept is understood. The first of these he characterises as "normative need", where need is defined by the expert or the professional as a set of standards to be met in the context of any given situation. Geismar (1980) follows in this tradition. He chooses to measure "community functioning" as an indicator of needs within a particular geographical territory. He presents selected professionals and leaders of the community with lists of services and problems which they can identify as either present or not present in the community. He defends this procedure as follows:

"The activity around which present evaluation efforts revolve is professional social work. Therefore, the social work practitioner who defines treatment goals...should be able to supply the most relevant list of standards of functioning by which the effectiveness of service can be judged." (37)

There are serious problems with this approach. The most obvious is that it is inevitably value-laden: standards of functioning, at the community or the family

level, will usually be developed within a typically middle class ideological framework. Normative need is often taken to be empirical fact. This is not so, says Bradshaw. It is a value judgement entailing the following propositions: an individual is in situation "x"; "x" is incompatible with the values held in society "y"; therefore "x" situation should be changed. (Bradshaw, 1972: 641).

Furthermore, the standards will usually be determined by the techniques of change with which the professional or expert is familiar (Forder, 1974). Thus as Rein (1969) points out, such studies unfailingly conclude that there is a need for whatever service is the focus of the enquiry.

A second meaning of the concept of need refers to "felt need". In this sense, "need" is synonymous with "want" (Bradshaw, 1972: 641). While giving priority to the subjective perceptions of the individuals within the population (e.g. Neuber, 1980), this formulation suffers from problems not unrelated to those of "normative need". On the one hand, it is limited by the knowledge of the individual, who may not be aware of the possibility of having certain needs "met", or may not be able to express a particular need that exists. Thus it is incumbent on the researcher to provide a list of possible needs and services, thereby surreptitiously replacing the concept of

"felt need" with one of "normative need".

Bradshaw also distinguishes between felt need and demand, which is a third way in which need can be understood. Demand refers to "expressed need". The population of those who have "expressed needs" is usually measured empirically in terms of clientele and/or "waiting lists", though other criteria may better establish demand as a more generalizable theoretical concept. For example, client and waiting list status imply that the agency is capable of meeting the particular demands of the individual. However, even clients may find that their expressed needs are not being met by the services provided. Thus studies of client satisfaction might help to develop a definition of need based on demands both met and unmet.

Another measurement of demand is the projected needs expressed by members of the population, an indicator somewhat akin to that of "felt need". However, research has demonstrated that projected needs expressed by a particular group, such as the aged, are not a good indicator of later use (Powers and Bultena 1980). These findings have been interpreted as suggesting that demand may provide an "inflated" view of needs. However, it may equally imply that people have needs to which available

services do not respond.

In the Quebec literature, the term "vulnerability" has replaced "needs", in recognition of the problem of definition. The "vulnerable" individual is one who has a high probability of facing a problem, that is, a person exposed to risks (Glaser & Renaud, 1980). Cote (1978) defines vulnerability as "a lack of economic or material means to face a problem in an autonomous fashion". This concept is somewhat more precise than "need", but it suffers from similar sorts of assumptions. For example, how does one determine what constitutes a "problem"?

Usually, the notion of "social problems" is operative here, in which case the drawbacks are the same as those of "normative need": ideology and interest play a large rôle in their definition. This is especially clear in Cote's formulation, where he assumes that economic and material resources are required to solve problems of social functioning. Furthermore, there is the assumption that individuals who are part of a "social problem", for example, single mothers or the poor, will be more likely to need social services. We are back to the concept of need, despite the earnest effort to avoid it with concepts of "vulnerability" and "risk".

Definition of the concepts is not the only obstacle to determining the distribution of relative needs within a population. Because no clear definition of need with respect to social services exists, conditions precipitating need have not been systematically examined. In order for need to be a useful concept for determining relative service requirements throughout a population, a theory outlining factors related to need would be appropriate.

While a theoretical basis, or bias, is certainly present in any discussion of needs and vulnerability, reference to such theories is never made. In the work of Cote, for example, social vulnerability is simply identified with limited access to economic and material resources, without explanatory elaboration. Rather, the theoretical question is passed over, and attention is focused directly on the development of indicators of vulnerability. The relationship of these indicators to social service needs is never established.

Furthermore, little attention has been paid to the difficulties in basing policy and planning decisions on social indicators. The literature on social indicators is often contradictory, and their usefulness for anything beyond description has been criticized on various grounds.

Social Indicators

Social indicators are variables associated with "quality of life". They may be either objective (income, education, housing, consumption, etc.) or subjective (degree of satisfaction with various aspects of life, perception of current life-style in comparison to others, etc.). The literature on social vulnerability generally assumes that objective indicators can serve as valid measurements of need or social vulnerability.

Specifically, Cote states that "les moyens qui permettent aux individus de jouir d'une certaine autonomie sociale sont identifiables: ce sont les facteurs socio-économiques" (pg.46). While Glaser and Renaud (1980) tentatively agree with this approach, they doubt that poverty alone can be a valid indicator of vulnerability, even though it may be an important one. They rightly conclude, that not enough theoretical attention has been given to the concept to permit the identification of valid indicators.

Others have strongly suggested that until explanatory models are developed in conjunction with empirical studies, social indicators are not useful tools for prediction or planning (Conseil des Affaires Sociales, 1977). Furthermore,

their use for assigning weights to population groups has been severely criticized by Wasserman and Chua (1980), as this implies a subjective value judgement regarding their relative importance.

Enquiry into the relationship between objective and subjective indicators has particular significance with respect to the question of social service needs. In a study of the association between income adequacy and quality of life, as measured by satisfaction and feelings of well-being, Wasserman and Chua (1980) found that subjective income adequacy accounted for more variation than objective income adequacy, with respect to all quality of life variables. Furthermore, they found almost no linkage between subjective and objective indicators. Studies by Kuz (1978) and Ackerman and Paolucci (1983) provided similar results, suggesting that income adequacy as measured by an objective standard is unrelated to perceived income adequacy. The conclusion drawn from this and other such research is that objective social indicators cannot measure an individual's quality of life as he or she experiences it. Well-being is not only a matter of one's physical, economic and social setting, but also a matter of how these are judged by the individuals themselves.

The implications of this seemingly obvious observation

are clear. Being disadvantaged means different things to different people. As social services are not mandatory, we may assume that normally, one would have to perceive oneself to be in an undesirable state for a need to arise. If objective indicators are indeed unrelated to subjective indicators, then individuals designated as being of low SES are not more likely to perceive themselves as vulnerable than those of high SES.

The social indicators literature provides a strong argument for the definition of "needs" vis a vis the social services, to be that of "felt need". It also suggests that felt need may not be strongly associated with objective indicators. The upshot is that subjective indicators provide no basis for examining the relative needs of identifiable sectors of the population. Objective indicators, on the other hand, are weak in terms of theoretical validity.

In a report by the Conseil des Affaires Sociales et de la Famille to the Quebec Ministère des Affaires Sociales (1977), the authors are very clear with respect to the atheoretical application of social indicators:

Il apparaît inutile, aux yeux du comité, de chercher, comme on l'a fait trop souvent

peut-être, à sélectionner, à aménager ou à organiser entre elles l'ensemble des statistiques sociales existantes dans l'espoir qu'elles puissent renseigner d'elles-mêmes sur l'état d'un phénomène social quelconque. Au contraire, il faut au préalable d'abord comprendre la structure et la dynamique de ce phénomène, en discerner les composantes et en identifier les facteurs de causalité, c'est à dire, en somme, en élaborer un modèle, en termes d'indicateurs sociaux à l'aide des données sociales empiriques. Les indicateurs ne peuvent acquérir une signification univoque et stable que s'ils sont intégrés dans un modèle éprouvé qui définit leurs relations avec d'autres variables et leur fournit ainsi une certaine intelligibilité. Ce n'est qu'à cette condition qu'ils peuvent être réellement utiles. (31)

Although no theory of social service needs exists to give some substance to social indicators, this is not to say that there has been no basis whatsoever for adopting certain demographic and socio-economic variables as indicative of the need for social services. Studies of social problems have provided an important source of information for determining who needs social services. However, many of the studies in crime and delinquency, and mental illness, for example, are themselves contradictory, and evidence both for and against an association between social indicators and these social problems can be found.

Social Problems and a Theory of Need

A theory which develops links between certain population characteristics and crime, delinquency, physical

or mental illness, or family stress, may be transferable to social service needs - or so one might imagine. The official role of social service agencies with respect to youth protection and the presence of social workers in the hospitals suggest the possibility of a link. Furthermore, the orientation of social services to family and individual counselling, and the role of providing instrumental help for those whose level of emotional, psychological or physical functioning makes it problematic to cope with everyday living, justifies the examination of this literature.

Of all the areas mentioned, crime and delinquency have enjoyed the greatest degree of theoretical elaboration. The most outstanding feature of classical criminal theory was the strength of the linkage between crime and poverty. As Schafer (1969) has pointed out:

"Hardly any of the thinkers of the causes of criminality omitted poverty or economic conditions from their catalogue of crime factors, and thus an endeavor to present those who have treated this issue would mean to list almost all who have treated the problem of crime." (255-256).

One basis for this association was the culture of poverty theory (Lewis, 1966), which referred to a large

degree to intergenerational effects of the socialization process. The argument connecting this perspective to criminal behaviour was that families living in poverty manifest certain undesirable traits which negatively influence child rearing practices, and serve as "defective" models for socialization. This process supposedly produces "psychologically damaged" individuals (Glueck & Glueck, 1968; Hewitt, 1970; Nettler, 1978). We might therefore be prepared to hypothesize that these same socialization experiences would produce individuals with a high incidence of social service needs.

However, another aspect of this theory suggests that as a result of the same socialization process, the poor develop a sub-culture characterized by its own norms and values, which denigrate the norms and values of the middle class (Cohen, 1955). This is an essential link in the association of the culture of poverty to crime. As Ahearn (1979) has pointed out:

"Within a structure of norms, beliefs and values, people define themselves, their environment and what is and is not a problem. This framework affects the existence of social and emotional resources as well as the process for problem resolution" (pg.6).

Thus the development of a sub-culture of poverty, while it

may or may not be related to crime and delinquency, would seem to imply the development of definitions of needs and means of having them met that lie outside the realm of public establishments. This raises questions about the assumed link between needs, and demand on public social service resources.

More recent theories of crime and delinquency have focused on self-reported illegal activities. This research suggests that the link between crime and low SES has been exaggerated due to reliance on official crime statistics. When self-reports are used, the link becomes much less obvious: in fact, there is a positive relationship between SES and involvement in less serious crimes, as well as a positive association between SES and the number of offences (Grasmick et al, 1983).

To explain the frequency of self-reported delinquency among both lower and middle class youths, current theories take into consideration the variable of informal social control. For example, the absence of controls in minority groups and subjects of low SES has been attributed to "weak social bonds", but for the "middle and upper classes "attenuated commitment" are considered to weaken social controls (Elliott et al, 1979). Elliot postulates that disorganization or crisis in the home, including parental

discord, may attribute to the weakening of a young person's bonds to family and/or community, thus diluting obstacles to delinquent behaviour.

These same factors could be associated with the need for social services, especially in the form of family counselling. However, what they offer is an explanation as to why the wealthy may need services as much as the poor. They provide contradictory evidence to the theory that the poor are more vulnerable to certain social problems than the rich.

The literature on physical and mental illness may also be considered to have some bearing on discussions of social service needs. The actual presence of social workers in hospitals, and the therapeutic orientation inherent in social work counselling would suggest that factors related to health will also be directly related to social service needs. Once again, the literature suggests strong links between low SES and admissions to both acute care and mental hospitals or wards (Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958).

The relationship between poverty and physical health can be accounted for by factors of nutrition, the home environment, such as insufficient heat and dangerous or unsanitary housing conditions, or stress brought about by

over-crowding (Dye, 1975), unemployment (Bourghart, 1981), and the anxiety of making ends meet. On the other hand, research has indicated an underutilization of health care facilities by the poor. Heller (1979) suggests that this underutilization "is one manifestation of the general estrangement of the poor from the mainstream of middle-class society and its social institutions" (pg.385).

Strauss (1967) argues that among lower class persons,

...the pervasive problematic character of life tends to make unreal the careful and solicitous attention toward health held out by the health professionals...[the present structure] of medical care is so alien to lower class individuals that they cannot intelligently or sanely take advantage of its services. (pg.155)

These observations are of particular significance with respect to social services. They suggest that there may be inherent obstacles to the poor taking advantage of social services, even, or perhaps especially, when these services are proffered through public organizations.

On a different note, a study of hospital social services by Kislowicz and Aronson (1980) suggests that within the hospital setting, more than 70% of social service clients were over 60 years old. This suggests that problems associated with age (such as care after discharge)

more often than poverty may have determined their need for services. Furthermore, it has been shown that the rate of social service usage by the elderly is higher than that of the population as a whole (Artzy and Bayreuther, 1982).

The reasons for this are many. Aside from the fact that the elderly are more often limited in their material resources, they appear to be particularly vulnerable in other ways, as well. As Heyman and Polansky point out:

Old age is a time when crises involving losses and changes coincide with diminishing strength and energy. The impact of multiple losses may result in a depletion of personal resources, and supportive relationships and other restitutive measures may be needed...(pg.303)

On the other hand, research by Bultena and Powers (1982) has demonstrated that the aged are likely to inflate their projected need for social services considerably. When later use was compared to earlier responses regarding which services were most needed, there was a wide discrepancy found, leading the researchers to speculate that amongst the elderly, needs are often projected in terms of common opinions about others, rather than in reference to oneself.

With respect to mental illness, hospital admittance

records present the same validity problems as official crime reports. While a large proportion of those admitted to public mental institutions may be of low SES, there is no way to detect the number of middle and upper class individuals seeing private psychiatrists or therapists, residing in private sanitoriums (Gove, 1972), or simply kept "hidden". Bremner (1973) has found that mental hospital admissions increase during periods of economic crisis, but suggests that the chronically poor, those living under constant economic stress, would have little to lose compared to higher income groups during a recession. This thesis is upheld by studies of suicides during the Great Depression, which indicate that sudden loss of assets, or the loss of previously secure employment, were the most common factors associated with suicide. In the final analysis, the relationship between mental illness and low SES is somewhat obscure. However, there are other factors associated with mental illness that might be useful in determining populations in need of social services.

Gove (1972), in a synthesis of the relevant literature, found that studies consistently indicated that the single, divorced and widowed are more likely to become mentally ill than married people. Also, women are more likely to become mentally ill than men. However, while there are higher rates of mental illness among married

women compared to married men, the rates are lower among single, divorced or widowed women compared to men in similar situations. These differences Gove attributes to stress related to women's marital roles. Srole et al (1962) found much higher rates of mental health impairment among the unmarried, with single men distinctly the worse off.

These data suggest that demographic characteristics might be insufficient or even deceptive indicators of social service needs. Considering the relatively high incidence of mental illness among married women and amongst people living alone, one might speculate as to the different reasons for social vulnerability among different population groups. But these studies suggest that an attempt to determine which population groups may be in greater need than others is more complex than the simple application of certain demographic indicators.

In any given society, there is usually some degree of consensus created with respect to what constitute the major social problems in that society. It is understandable that the government and social workers alike should target these social problems as requiring the primary attention of public social services. On the other hand, the attempt to associate these problems with particular population

characteristics, is less than straight forward.

Firstly, there is a significant amount of contradictory and misleading evidence with respect to characteristics associated with social problems. The role of low socio-economic status is a case in point. Tittle (1983), after presenting the contradictory findings of other authors with respect to the relationship between crime and low SES, states: "Most have assumed that the theoretical basis for such a [hypothesis of association] is self-evident, or that the proposition is so widely rooted in the literature that no specific derivation is necessary" (335). Only recently are some "taken-for-granted" theories being questioned. However, they continue to be taken for granted as reference points for assumptions with respect to social service needs.

A second difficulty, related to theories based on more recent empirical studies, is the emphasis placed on subjective states, such as "attenuated commitment" or "role stress". If this literature is to serve as a guideline for developing a theory of social needs, we may have to accept that such a theory could not be based on objective social factors. This would suggest the impossibility of predicting differential rates of need on the basis of population characteristics.

Another difficulty is related to the unique character of a theory of social service needs. While it may make "common sense" to suggest that where social factors lead to crime, delinquency, physical or mental illness, they may also be associated with the need for social services. This suggestion assumes a normative definition of need: those who are not functioning according to the standards of society are de facto in need of social services.

However, there are numerous reasons why individuals objectively defined as needing services may never make use of them, even if changes in the mode of service delivery and intervention occur. For example, Heller (1979) suggests that amongst the lower classes, emotional and physical needs will be satisfied on an informal basis, through interaction with kin and friends, people with whom the individual has an emotional attachment. Trust of strangers is not often developed. Ahearn (1979) points out that for many ethnic groups, a "fatalistic" philosophy plays an important role: some individuals will have a greater willingness to accept misfortune as the will of God, rather than try to change themselves or their situation. The ideology of independence and autonomy that is so strong throughout our society also serves as a barrier to the perception of need.

Given the as yet unresolved problems of standardizing a definition of need, and indications that a valid theory of needs may not be helpful in terms of differentiating between population groups, it is surprising that concrete proposals for resource distribution in the social service network suggest uncritically the use of population characteristics as measures of the extent of need in a given territory. While some of the literature on social problems provides a particular theoretical basis for this procedure, overall it suggests a high degree of ambiguity with respect to the relationship between characteristics and social vulnerability.

The literature also provides arguments that put into question the relationship between vulnerability and use of social services. Often, the same population groups that may be defined as being in greatest need are the least likely to make demands on institutional resources. As Scriven (1982) has argued, social service researchers' "obsession" with need and vulnerability has resulted in the neglect of other issues relevant to resource allocation.

Since the question of resource distribution is primarily a pragmatic one, a good starting point for the examination of the prevalent assumptions is the existing

proposals that have been put forward by the regional council of the social service network. These are the proposals that argue for the use of a measure of socio-economic status and/or age as a basis for weighting different territorial populations with respect to their relative needs, and therefore, their relative demand on social services.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The question of resource distribution has been one of abiding concern to the three Social Service Centres in the Montreal area, which share a single regional budget. Each agency is tied to a particular territory, and therefore, to a particular population. While the territories tend to represent different cultural groups, it is their geographical boundaries which delineate, for the purposes of regional planning, the territorial population for each agency.

Currently, agencies receive a proportion of the regional budget relative to the size of their target population. Suggestions have been made, however, that this system does not allow all agencies to serve their territories equitably. It is argued that some territorial populations are more vulnerable than others, and that therefore, some agencies require a greater proportion of available resources than others.

Thus, recent inter-agency discussions have revolved around the possibility of weighting territorial populations

according to their demographic and/or socio-economic characteristics. The justification for this proposal lies with two assumptions: the first is that certain of these characteristics are associated with greater vulnerability to social service needs, and the second is that greater needs will be reflected in a greater demand on the resources of the agency serving that particular population.

The model implied by these assumptions has certain sectors of the population, such as the elderly or the poor, defined as socially disadvantaged, and therefore in greater need of personal counselling and instrumental help than others. However, this relationship has never been tested. Instead, research has focused almost entirely on the social indicators themselves -- for example, on validating an indicator of socio-economic status -- while their relationship to "needs" is glossed over. The following quotation from an ambitious piece of research carried out by one social service center provides an interesting example:

Il est donc supposé qu'une augmentation de volume [dans la population] entraîne une augmentation proportionnelle de besoins en services sociaux et que de la même façon, une baisse de statut économique entraîne une augmentation proportionnelle de besoins en

services sociaux. Soulignons que les résultats de recherche ne précisent pas à date la forme d'influence qu'exerce le statut économique sur les besoins en services sociaux...Cependant, en l'absence de données pertinentes, nous devons postuler une relation linéaire entre le statut et les besoins. (Meyer-Renaud, 1980, pg.15)

Another unexamined premise of this model is that the agency whose territorial population is identified (according to demographic and socio-economic characteristics) as being in greater need than another, will have a greater demand placed on its services and therefore, its resources. As yet, little or no research has been conducted to test whether or not this is a valid assumption. Factors such as ignorance, stigma, suspicion, the means of organizing and dispensing services, and the availability of alternatives all play an empirically undetermined role.

Furthermore, the Social Service Centres are often unable to handle all the demands that are made, due to the absolute limits on the total social service budget. Thus, there is very little outreach by the Social Service Centres to so-called needy populations whose members do not approach the agencies on their own, or are not referred by other professionals. Given these theoretical and pragmatic considerations, it is not evident that the extent to which a population is defined as being in need will be reflected

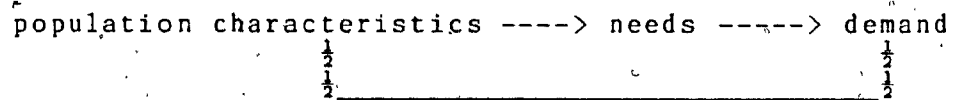
in the extent of demands placed on the resources of an agency.

From the above discussion one can identify at least two theoretical issues which require extensive examination if a valid rationale for resource distribution is to be developed. The first of these revolves around the relationship between social indicators and the need for social services. The second revolves around the gap between the presumed extent of social service needs and actual demands on social service resources. In the empirical context of Montreal's social service network, the policy of providing equal and similar services on a territorial basis depends on a model of resource distribution that adequately reflects these issues. Thus, an examination of the current assumptions would be helpful.

If, as argued by some theorists, the need for social services is related to demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and if need is reflected in the demand on the resources of an agency, then we would expect to find evidence of an association between population characteristics and extent of demand (see Figure 1). Such evidence might be a) that individuals with certain characteristics are more likely than others to become

clients of a social service agency, or b) that clients with these same characteristics are likely to require more extensive services than others.

Figure 1



If, on the other hand, we find little or no relationship between population characteristics and demand on resources, it throws into question the central assumptions upon which current resource distribution proposals are based. It questions whether there is a relationship between demographic and socio-economic characteristics and needs, and/or it questions whether there is a relationship between need and the extent of actual demand on social service resources.

The extent and form of data regarding the use of social services in Montreal places severe limits on the examination of these questions. There is at this time no reliable information which would allow us to test the relationship between population characteristics and the likelihood to become a client of a social service centre.

However, the centres have in recent years begun to collect data on their own clients. Thus, we can now examine the relationship between client characteristics and the extent of demand on a particular agency's resources. If the assumptions discussed above are valid, we would expect to find that such a relationship exists: clients with certain population characteristics would be making greater demands on the resources of the agency than others.

METHODOLOGY

In this exploratory study, regression analysis is used to identify the relative impact of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of clients on the extent of resource demands. For theoretical and methodological reasons which will be explained in this chapter, a series of control factors were included in the regression equations at various points in the analysis.

Multiple regression is a statistical technique for analysing the relative predictive value of certain variables with respect to another, dependent variable. The multiple regression procedure calculates which variables have a significant effect and which do not, and provides a measure of the comparative strength of the effect of each variable. One use for regression analysis is as a descriptive tool, to describe the overall or relative impact of a set of independent variables on a dependent variable, or to specify the direction and strength of association between a series of causally related variables. Another use is as an inferential tool, to evaluate a hypothesis about a particular population (Nie et

al, 1975), i.e., that there is a linear relationship between a dependent variable and a set of independent variables. It is in this context that regression analysis is appropriate for examining the current hypothesis.

The Data Base

The raw data that serves as a base for this study was collected in 1982, on a sample comprised of 3,477 clients from one social service centre in the city of Montreal. There are always constraints involved in the analysis of secondary data. In this case, because each social service centre in the city is not only associated with a particular geographical territory, but is also tied to a major language and/or religious community, generalizability may be a problem. It is possible that the clientele of a different agency might demonstrate different behaviour in terms of demands on services. Likewise, if the services offered by the agencies differ, or service delivery differs, then patterns of demand may differ as well.

But there are reasons to expect that the latter inconsistencies between agencies are negligible. The uniformity of the social service centres is an objective of the legislation that created them. The purpose was to ensure universal and equal access to services, through the

development of a network of centres providing specified types of services in each region of the province. All agencies are organized along very concrete guidelines provided by the Ministry, both in terms of administrative and service units.

Due to possible variations in the professional orientation of management and social workers, there may be differences not only between agencies, but within agencies as well, when management or staff changes occur. The generalizability of studies pertaining to any type of organization are limited in this sense.

The possibility of consistent variation in the behaviour of the clientele of different agencies, even when comparing clients of similar demographic and socio-economic characteristics, is none the less present. For example, the elderly in one area make lower demands on the resources of an agency than the elderly in another area, due to the existence of complimentary services in the community, such as Golden Age Clubs or Meals on Wheels. Replication of this study using different client samples is the only way to determine the generalizability of the present client sample.

On the other hand, some of the more obvious factors

distinguishing the clientele of one agency from another have been controlled. These include religion and language, as the social service centres in Montreal are associated with particular cultural communities. The fact that this association is relatively loose, and one finds clients of all religions and all language groups obtaining services from all agencies, permits the use of control factors. However, as the results of this study will highlight, it is still possible that a Francophone client may behave differently when obtaining services from a Francophone institution, just as a Jewish client may behave differently when obtaining services from a Jewish institution. Again, replication is required to determine if such patterns are general or particular to specific cultural groups.

A second constraint in using secondary data is that it was not collected with a view to answering the specific questions raised in this paper. Therefore, pre-tested indicators of the extent of demands being made on resources, or of SES, for example, are not to be found. This is not to suggest that this study is based on invalid indicators. Rather, the choice and construction of indicators was constrained by the form in which existing data was available. The variables will be discussed in detail in the following section.

The sample of clients actually represents all registered clients of the agency during a one month period. This includes individuals who had become clients before the data collection period and were still active during it, as well as clients who registered with the agency during the data collection period. The 3,477 clients represent about 38% of the agency's annual clientele. On this basis, with the agency clientele as the population, the confidence interval for the sample is better than 99%. The fact that every client registered during the statistical period was counted would tend to eliminate the possibility of biases in sampling, as it is improbable that the distribution of clients varies significantly by month.

For reasons related to confidentiality, the data on each client were reported to the researchers by his/her social worker, rather than by the client him/herself. Responses were based on information in clients' files, coded by the social workers, and relayed to in-house researchers on anonymous questionnaire forms. The researchers had issued detailed instructions regarding the coding procedures, and had been available to the social workers throughout the data collection period to clarify uncertainties with respect to coding. This method ensured a much higher response rate per question than would

normally be achieved in an interview or client-response questionnaire, as clients could not refuse to participate or to answer certain questions. Of course, some data are missing due to missing information in client files.

As to the accuracy of responses with respect to demographic and socio-economic variables, information in files is based on clients' reports, and therefore is probably not less accurate than if the client him/herself had responded to the questions. However, there are other variables which indeed may have been biased by the fact that we are examining social workers' interpretations of information provided to them by clients. An example is the reporting of the problem presented by the client, which might easily and understandably be "transformed" by the time it is reported by a social worker. Otherwise, and despite the training and other precautions mentioned above, the reliability of the data may still be constrained by the fact that eighty-two social workers took part in the data collection process. This is a problem common to any large scale survey.

The Dependent Variables

In the general hypothesis that will be tested in this study, the dependent variable is the extent of clients'

demands on resources. Resources have been defined in terms of the time demanded from professional and support staff of the agency. Three indicators of demand on time have been identified, each measuring a different dimension of the variable. These are CASE COMPLEXITY, DURATION, and REPETITION. Their theoretical basis and operationalization will be discussed in this section.

Case complexity was measured by developing an index on the basis of the number of problems or service requests presented by the client, the number of problems assessed by the social worker and the number of services provided to the client. It distinguishes between those that may be termed "crisis cases" and others, which do not require as extensive a mobilization of resources. This variable includes cases which, despite extensive resource mobilization, may be completed within a short, concentrated treatment period. The agency must respond to such crises by concentrating its professional resources on the case, with the result that less time is available for other clients, and additional professionals such as supervisory staff and supplementary staff (e.g., legal advisor) are required to participate.

The complexity of a case is represented on the questionnaire by three separate lists of dichotomous

variables, under the headings of "Problems presented/services requested by the client", "Target problems after assessment", and "Services received by the client". On the basis of this information on each client in the sample, the concentrated demand on professional time was measured by a) the number of problems presented or services requested by each client, b) the number of problems assessed by the social worker for each client, and c) the number of service-related activities carried out on behalf of each client.

In a factor analysis of the dependent variables (see Table I)², the loadings on one factor for the three indicators of case complexity were .760, .791, and .720 respectively. On the basis of these high intercorrelations, a single factor score might have been used as an index of case complexity. However, the process would have implied arbitrarily assigning an equal weight

2. The factor analysis revealed two factors, one related to the number of problems and services, and the second related to length of time. The number of case openings did not appear to be an integral part of either factor. These findings provide some support for the theoretical argument that there are three independent dimensions of the extent of demand that can be measured. Number of problems and duration are related to two different factors, implying that they measure two different dimensions of the variable (Smith, 1975). Since the number of previous openings is not highly intercorrelated with either factor, it must be treated as a third dimension of the extent of demand.

weight to each element of the index.

Rather than proceeding in this manner, only one of the three variables was adopted as a dependent variable for the purposes of the regression analysis. The one chosen was "number of problems assessed by the social worker", as this indicator demonstrated the highest intercorrelation with the factor identified as case complexity. Theoretically speaking, it also has a high level of content validity, as here we have social workers reporting their own evaluations of a case. Case complexity, as measured by the number of problems assessed by the social worker, is an interval level variable, with values from 1 to 40.

TABLE I

Factor Analysis of Dependent Variables

	Factor I	Factor II
No. of Problems Presented	.76016	.37821
No. of Problems Assessed	.79116	.29723
No. of Services Received	.71987	.30305
No. of Previous Openings	.16593	.21892
Length of Time Case Open	.34376	.80771
Length of Time Case Expected to Remain Open	.26104	.78954
Percent of Variance Explained	70.5	29.5

The second dimension of demand on resources is the DURATION of a case. This refers to the situation where there is a continuous involvement and responsibility for the welfare of the client, usually including the long-term co-ordination of ongoing instrumental help or care over a period of time often adding up to years. Where caseloads consist of a large number of such chronic clients, new clients cannot be taken on. Thus long-term clients consume a disproportionate amount of an agency's time that could otherwise be spread over a greater number of clients.

This dimension of demand on resources was measured in terms of the duration of a case. The variable was computed by adding the "length of time the case has been open" to "the length of time the case is expected to remain open". It is an interval level variable, measured in units of months, ranging from 0 to 60 months or longer.

A third dimension of demand is indicated by the number of times that a case was reopened for a particular client. The repeat client can be understood as placing demands on the organization not only in a similar manner to the chronic client, but also in terms of administrative demands. Each new case opening requires an "intake" procedure. Also, a repeat client will not always have

access to the same worker he or she saw previously, entailing a process of "briefing" and reassessment. This involves not only time with the client, but research into old files, and consultation with previous workers. In this sense, the client who is more likely to be repeatedly referred (or to repeatedly return as a self-referral), can be understood to make greater demands on an organization than the client who makes one-time use of the agency's services, even if the amount of time each case remains open is not particularly long. Again, the agency's ability to serve potential clients is limited, as a repeat case will usually receive priority.

This variable is measured at the interval level, with values ranging from no previous openings to five or more previous openings.

The Independent Variables

With respect to the choice of independent variables, the literature as well as current proposals for resource allocation factors served as general guidelines. The specific demographic and socio-economic characteristics chosen for this study, were ones which have received attention in the social service network, having been suggested as potentially valid indicators of need or

vulnerability. In addition, certain sets of control variables were included at various stages in the analysis.

To control for the particular characteristics of the agency from which the sample was drawn, dummy variables were created for RELIGION and LANGUAGE, and these were included among the independent variables in the regression equation³ while SEX was also introduced as a control factor with FEMALE = 1. The importance of its inclusion is based on the fact that over 60% of the sample is female. Higher consumption rates among women compared to men have also been noted for the health services. Therefore, there is a possibility that sex might be a significant factor with respect to demands on social service resources as well.

Following the three controls, the first variable which will be examined in terms of its relationship to the extent of clients' demands on resources is ETHNICITY. Its inclusion is based on certain literature (e.g. Prudhomme, 1979) arguing that ethnicity is a significant factor in identifying children at risk. Other literature has

3. The precise values of religion and language are not given in order to protect the identity of the agency being studied, at their own request. However, the values for religion included Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and other, while for language, they included French, English and a series of others.

suggested its importance in terms of mental illness (Ahearn, 1978) and in terms of problems of social adaptation and integration. One might argue, therefore, that greater demands may be made by those individuals whose background is other than Canadian, American, British or French. Hence, ethnicity was coded as a dummy variable with all groups excluding Canadian, American, British and French assigned a value of 1. While the reliability of the social workers' coding decisions might be weak in terms of identifying the precise ethnic group to which a client belonged, it is probably more reliable in terms of identifying those who belonged to each of the collapsed categories.

The second and third independent variables are related to the age of the client. The government's general guidelines for social services target children "at risk" and the elderly as groups "in urgent need" of services. This implies that the relationship between age and demands on resources is not a linear one, though regression analysis assumes a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, rather than create a single age variable, two dummy variables were created: the first, OLD AGE, refers to all clients over the age of 61 years, and the second, YOUTH, refers to those clients under the age of 18 years.

Socio-economic status is also a factor considered to be of central importance in identifying persons in need of social services. Considerable research has gone into the development and validation of indicators of SES. The indicator that is currently of greatest interest to the Quebec social service community is a five point scale based on education and personal income (Carlos, 1978). However, on the basis of available data, it was impossible to reconstruct this scale with reference to the clients of the social service centre on which this study is focused.

Both education and personal income were coded at the ordinal rather than the interval level on the questionnaire, precluding accurate calculation of the above-mentioned indicator for SES. The expected correlation between the two variables is usually high enough to permit the inclusion of only one of these indicators in a regression equation to account for the effect of both. However, an unusual finding with respect to the data was that college education was not highly correlated with any SES variable, including personal income. This finding could be explained in two ways: a) the skewed age distribution of the sample - over 30% of the clientele of the agency is over the age of 70 due to the demographics of both the geographical territory associated with the agency,

and the cultural community - may result in a relatively high frequency of retired college graduates, who are now living on low fixed incomes; or b) there may be a distortion effect (Smith, 1975) on the basis of the types of problems which bring people into contact with a social service centre in the first place; that is, the usually high correlation between income and education may be distorted due to the fact that a sample of social service clients is not entirely similar to a population sample. In order to minimize the effect of these two possibilities, both education and personal income are included in the regression equations as independent variables.

COLLEGE is a variable which refers to all clients who have completed at least a college level diploma (such as that offered by a CEGEP in Quebec, or junior college), including those who may have completed one or more university degrees. The reference group is those who have a high school education or less. It is followed by two other dummy variables, namely, SINGLE PARENT and LIVING ALONE. All three were included prior to any economic variables since they are likely to affect the socio-economic status of the client. Much of the literature has targeted the members of single parent families and those living alone as being "at risk", in terms of poverty, stress, and child-related difficulties

for single mothers, and in terms of poverty, crime, mental illness, loneliness and several other problems for those who live alone.

SINGLE PARENT includes all clients who are members of single parent families, as indicated by responses to a question asking for the identification of the client's family composition. The reference group includes all members of intact families, as well as members of blended families (remarriages). While it is possible that the inclusion of blended families in the reference group may minimize the effects of single parent family membership, it should be pointed out that there are only 146 members of blended families, to 1,532 members of intact families in the reference group. All individuals who do not live in either a family or institutional setting are included in the dummy variable LIVING ALONE.

These demographic characteristics were followed by the socio-economic variables. Here, various considerations influenced the choice of indicators. The first to be examined were those that reflect economic dependency. The Ministry has been using an indicator of economic dependency called "inactivity", which includes all individuals over the age of 15 years who are not members of the labour force, such as welfare recipients, pensioners and full-time

homemakers or students. Despite some controversy surrounding the validity of such an indicator as a measure of dependency, INACTIVITY was included as an independent variable. It was created on the basis of all clients who responded "no" to the question: "Are you employed?", minus those clients who responded that unemployment insurance was their major source of income.

However, a second measure of economic dependency was also developed, to ensure a better indication of the effect of the concept as opposed to the "inactivity" indicator. This was STATE SUPPORT, and was computed on the basis of all those clients whose principal source of income was not salary, savings or "other". The "other" category usually indicated dependence on the income of a spouse or parents. STATE SUPPORT explicitly includes those whose major source of income is welfare, UIC, pension (including QPP, OAP, Veteran's pension, widow's pension, disability pension, or union pension), bursary or scholarship. The creation of this variable is justified by the theoretical argument put forth by Cote (1978), suggesting that financial autonomy is a valid indicator of vulnerability. STATE SUPPORT alleviates some of the theoretical problems associated with

4. Individuals collecting unemployment insurance are still considered to be part of the labour force, according to the definition of the Ministry.

using inactivity as an indicator of SES, such as the latter's inclusion of the dependent spouses of well-off workers.

Finally, PERSONAL INCOME completes the set of independent variables. It is based on an ordinal scale provided in the questionnaire. Although interval level data are usually assumed for regression analysis, ordinal level measurements can still be interpreted through standardized co-efficients, with each value understood as a unit of measurement⁵. Table II indicates the values of income, and their distribution in the sample.

5. While the rationale for developing the ordinal values of income as they appear in Table II may be somewhat unclear, no other source is available. It bears mentioning that these values are used in the client profiles of more than one agency.

TABLE II

Distribution of Clients by Annual Personal Income

Income Range	Frequency	%
under \$3,0000	77	4.03
\$ 3,000 - \$ 4,999	375	19.64
\$ 5,000 - \$ 7,999	735	38.50
\$ 8,000 - \$11,999	217	11.37
\$12,000 - \$14,999	127	6.65
\$15,000 - \$19,999	107	5.61
\$20,000 and over	271	14.20
Total no. of responses	1909	100.00

Table III summarizes the independent variables, their frequencies in the sample, and the expected direction of their effect on extent of demand. Total frequencies for each variable differ somewhat due to missing cases; in the final regression equations, only those cases which are not missing on all variables are counted. The frequencies for value = 1 indicate that for certain variables, the distribution is somewhat skewed. This might have an effect on the outcome of the regression analysis, which standardizes scores for each variable. However, in all cases the frequencies are high enough to allow for a reasonable prediction of their effects on the dependent variables.

TABLE III

Independent Variables,
their Frequency Distributions,
and Expected Direction of Association with
Extent of Demand on Resources

Dummy Variables	Frequency for Value = 1	Total frequency	%	Expected effect
ETHNICITY	1497	3447	43.43	+
OLD AGE	1432	3441	41.62	+
YOUTH	515	3441	14.97	+
COLLEGE EDUCATION	496	2396	20.70	-
SINGLE PARENT FAMILY	387	2511	15.41	+
LIVING ALONE	692	2944	23.51	+
STATE SUPPORT	2118	3278	64.61	+
INACTIVITY	1851	3213	57.61	+
Interval Variable				
PERSONAL INCOME		(see Table II)		-

Controlling for Problems

On the basis of the results of the regression procedure, which were somewhat ambiguous, a second step in the analysis was undertaken in order to clarify the relationship between demographic and socio-economic characteristics of clients, and the extent of their demand on social service resources. In this step, the types of problems presented by the clients, or the types of service requests were included as control variables.

As previously mentioned, the proposals for a model for resource distribution have assumed that the relationship between population characteristics and demand on social service resources is mediated by the clients' needs. That is, "needs" is interpreted as an intervening factor between population characteristics and demand on resources (see Figure I).

The intervening factor of need cannot be measured directly. In fact, the definition of need itself is extremely controversial, as discussed above. For this reason, and due to the fact that we are limited by the nature of the available data, we chose to approximate a control for need in an indirect fashion, by using the "types of problems presented or services requested by the client".

A list of "problems presented/services requested" was included in the original questionnaire. However, this questionnaire was both designed and completed by social workers, not the clients themselves. Thus the validity of the list is questionable. Furthermore, no distinction was made between problems presented and services requested. The list, then, could not be considered reliable in terms of identifying the nature of problems presented, but could none the less reveal in a less specific manner whether or

not problems play an intervening role.

The value of the "type of problem" for our purposes rests on the assumption that variations in client needs are related to variations on the type of problems presented. In other words, we must assume that some problems represent greater need on the part of the client than others.

It is possible that this assumption could be elaborated in such a manner that the various types of problems might be ranked according to the extent of need which they represent. For the purposes of this research, however, such a task is unnecessary. Since we are primarily interested in whether a relationship exists between characteristics and the demand on resources, a detailed elaboration of the nature of that relationship would constitute a diversion from our goal.

Instead, we have chosen to use the type of problems as a control variable, only to determine whether a potential relationship between population characteristics and demand on resources may be masked by the intervening role of needs. To do so, we will compare the strength of association between population characteristics and demand on resources with and without the introduction of the type of problems as a control.

Ten problems/service requests, coded as dummy variables, were controlled in the second step of the analysis. They include those that were most often cited by the social workers in the questionnaire responses:

- Placement of child or adolescent
- Placement of elderly
- Monitoring vulnerable client
- Marital counselling
- Individual counselling
- Family counselling
- Discharge planning (from hospital or convalescent home)
- Legal protection of youth
- Home care
- System work and negotiation on behalf of client

Validity

Issues related to external validity have been mentioned above. While the sample of clients can be considered fairly random in the sense that all clients within a randomly chosen time period were included in the original survey, the sample is NOT random with respect to social service clients throughout the city. Its generalizability is confined to the clients of a particular organization. As this study is intended to be exploratory, the results must be interpreted as suggesting avenues for further research, including replication in other agencies.

With respect to internal validity, the main difficulty encountered was that of multicollinearity: certain of the independent variables were highly correlated, which, if included in the same equation, would result in a distortion of the regression co-efficients. For example, there was a relatively high correlation between both OLD AGE and YOUTH, and all SES factors except STATE SUPPORT. These correlations ranged from .41 to .55 -- high enough to cause considerable distortion, but not high enough to allow one variable to substitute for another. The point at which multicollinearity becomes highly problematic is not absolute. Smith (1978) suggests that independence of the variables is an assumption of multiple regression, though in practice, most researchers allow for correlations of up to .5.

The problem of multicollinearity was handled by specifically choosing the threshold for inclusion and selection of variables in the regression equations (Nie ~~et~~ al, 1975). The tolerance, that is, the proportion of variance NOT explained by variables already included in the equation, was set at .6. This means that if at least 40% of the variance of an independent variable has been accounted for by all other independent variables already in the equation, it is not entered. The advantage of this

procedure over "manual" determination of multicollinearity is that the latter is based on zero-order correlations; however, while the zero-order correlation between, say, age and income may be high, it may drop significantly when the interaction effects of other variables are taken into consideration. The order in which the variables were entered was also chosen with a view as to which might be theoretically "prior". Thus age and education, for example, were entered prior to socio-economic indicators.

In the following chapter, the results of the regression equations are presented and discussed. Each dimension of the extent of demand on resources is addressed independently. Tables IV through VI include two sets of regression co-efficients: in the first column are the co-efficients of the independent variables when controlling for sex, religion and language only; in the second column, we have controlled for the types of problems presented or services requested, as well. The co-efficients are presented only for those variables which have a statistically significant association with the dependent variables.

FINDINGS

The factor analysis of indicators of demand suggested that there are three dimensions of demand that can be analysed on the basis of the available data: complexity of the case, duration of the case, and the number of previous case openings. Each of these will be examined in turn, followed by a summary of the findings.

Demand in terms of Case Complexity

As indicated in Table IV, the regression analysis has identified several significant variables associated with case complexity, operationalized in terms of the number of problems assessed by the social workers. These are "state support", "personal income", and "old age", with the last characteristic being negatively related to the dependent variable. However, the analysis also indicates that all of these demographic and socio-economic factors have an extremely weak relationship with the complexity of the case, despite their statistical significance.

TABLE IV

Number of Problems Assessed
in Relation to
Demographic and Socio-economic
Characteristics of Clients

Standardized Coefficients
Controlling for Sex, Religion and Language

Control Variables	Not Controlling for Problems	Controlling for Problems
SEX	(a)	(a)
RELIGION	(a)	(a)
LANGUAGE	(a)	-.058*
PLACE CHILD	(b)	.107***
PLACE ELDERLY	(b)	.056*
MARITAL COUNSELLING	(b)	.155***
FAMILY COUNSELLING	(b)	.144***
INDIV COUNSELLING	(b)	.179***
HOMECARE	(b)	.131***
MONITORING	(b)	.262***
HOSPITAL DISCHARGE	(b)	.143***
YOUTH PROTECTION	(b)	.124***
NEGOTIATION	(b)	.108***
Independent Variables		
ETHNICITY	(a)	(a)
OLD AGE	-.108**	-.163***
YOUTH	(a)	(a)
COLLEGE EDUCATION	(a)	(a)
SINGLE PARENT FAMILY	(a)	.047*
LIVING ALONE	(a)	(a)
STATE SUPPORT	.107**	.091**
INACTIVITY	(a)	(a)
PERSONAL INCOME	-.174***	-.143***
Constant	4.665	3.052
R Squared (controls included)	.053	.380

(a) Tolerance = $<.6$
Significance = $<.05$
(b) Not in this equation

* significant at .05
** significant at .01
*** significant at .001

Considering the effect of the significant factors and the demographic controls, only 5.3% of the variance in case complexity is explained. A vertical comparison of the standardized co-efficients in the first column of Table IV demonstrates that, while none have a very great effect, the difference between them is also meagre.

From this preliminary analysis, it appears that demographic and socio-economic variables are poor predictors of the complexity of a client's case. However, in order to determine whether the current analysis would be significantly affected if the types of problems or service requests presented by the clients were controlled, a new regression equation was carried out. The second column of Table IV presents the results of this analysis.

The high correlation between specified types of problems and case complexity is evident by the wide range of significant variables, and the increase in the amount of variance explained, from 5.3% when client characteristics are considered alone, to 38% when problems are included in the regression equation. However, controlling for problems does not appear to have a very large or consistent effect on the relationship between client characteristics and case complexity.

Each characteristic that originally appeared to have a significant (though very weak) association with case complexity is shown to change little when problems or service requests presented are controlled, with one exception. A significant relationship between membership in a single parent family and case complexity appears. This implies that a negative relationship between certain problems presented and membership in a single parent family served to suppress an otherwise significant relationship between the latter variable and case complexity.⁶ In contrast, those variables which were not greatly affected by the introduction of the controls (old age, state support and personal income) have a more or less direct association with case complexity, which is not affected by particular problems presented or service requests made.

Overall, there is no suggestion of any regular pattern of association between client characteristics, the types of problems presented or services requested, and the number of problems assessed by the social worker. It is evident

6. Theoretically, the result may have been obtained if the relationship between a particular problem associated with single parent families, and the number of problems assessed were negative. However, as Table IV indicates, none of the problems examined demonstrates a negative relationship with the dependent variable.

that, despite the large amount of variance explained with the introduction of types of problems into the regression equation, the role of types of problems with respect to the relationship between clients' characteristics and case complexity is both inconsistent and weak. Therefore, an examination of specific problems is not useful for establishing the association of demographic and socio-economic variables to case complexity.

None the less, the fact that certain demographic and socio-economic variables, namely, old age, state support and personal income, do have statistical significance with respect to case complexity suggests the relationships, however weak, are consistent. Therefore, the implications of these associations bear closer examination.

Of greatest interest is the fact that the significant variables are similar to those that are assumed to be most useful in predicting demand on resources in current resource distribution proposals which are based on the concept of "vulnerable" population groups. However, there are several very important differences.

The first of these is that the relationship of old age to the number of problems assessed is a negative one. This means that elderly clients are less likely than others to

have a complex constellation of problems. The implication is that even if the elderly make up a greater proportion of the clientele in a particular agency, they will be less demanding on resources than other clients, at least in terms of case complexity.

Another important difference between the findings so far and the assumptions of current distribution proposals is the insignificance of the variable "inactivity": a M.A.S. criterion. The variable "state support", however, was indeed significant. The former concept has been the object of considerable criticism, and therefore, the discrepancy will not come as surprise to many in the field. Carter (1983) points out that the M.A.S. indicator (inactivity) is intended as a measure of the tendency of populations in each CSS territory to be dependent on state services. But his own research demonstrates a high rate of inactivity in areas of the city considered to be economically advantaged. He contributes this phenomenon to the "higher proportion of inactive spouses, with active spouses earning relatively high incomes" (pg.23). The validity of inactivity as a indicator of dependency on the state is therefore called into question, though not the usefulness of the concept of state dependence per se.

At this point, however, we might ask what the

implication of the statistical significance of state support is, as well as the implications of the statistical significance of personal income, old age and living alone with respect to case complexity. While it is evident from the size of the coefficients and the R squared that the relationship is a weak one in all cases, there is none the less a relationship that can be discussed.

Both income and state support appear as independently significant factors in the analysis. This suggests that low income per se has a small effect on the extent of the demands a client makes on resources, whether this income is gained from employment or from the state. But the effect of dependency on the state is significant in its own right. The effects of these two socio-economic variables do not appear to be mediated to any large degree by their relationship to particular problems or service requests presented by the clients; the effects are slightly weakened when types of problems are controlled, but not to any significant degree. This implies that regardless of the type of problems presented, those clients whose personal income is low and those who depend on the state for support tend to be assessed by the social worker as having a greater number of problems, and are likely to receive a larger constellation of services. Thus there is a direct, though weak relationship between socio-economic

characteristics of the client and the likelihood to demand more of the agency's resources, in the form of more concentrated professional attention.

As previously mentioned, the negative effect of "old age" on case complexity is contrary to the expected direction, according to current assumptions within the social service network. When the types of problems or service requests are controlled, this negative relationship becomes slightly stronger, suggesting that there are certain problems that modify it, but not enough to reverse the direction of the relationship. While proposals for a resource distribution model suggest that a population with a large proportion of elderly individuals should be weighted, as the elderly are more likely to make greater demands on the resources of an agency, Table IV indicates that the elderly clients of this agency are likely to be assessed as having fewer problems than other clients, and are also likely to receive fewer services, since these are distinguished by the social workers. On the other hand, though the direction of the relationship is statistically significant, the extent of the negative association is weak.

Finally, a weak but statistically significant association between living in a single parent family and

the complexity of a case is shown to appear when types of problems are controlled. This implies that a negative correlation between certain types of problems and single parent families intervenes in an otherwise positive relationship between such families and the number of problems assessed by the social worker. This may reflect a discrepancy between the manner in which the members of single parent families present their problems, or the types of services they request, and the way in which these requests are interpreted by the social worker. In any case, the effect of single parent family membership on case complexity is extremely weak despite its statistical significance.

Demand in terms of Duration of the Case

An analysis of the length of time an individual remained a client produced similar results as those reported above (Table V). Only 3.5% of the variance in the length of time a case will remain open is accounted for by demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the clients. Again, from the practical point of view, none of these factors appear to have much value in terms of predicting variation in the extent of demands made on the agency's resources. Although significant patterns can be distinguished, the overall effect of socio-economic and

demographic variables is small, and the differences in the effects of the variables examined is negligible.

In the context of case duration, we again considered the possibility that the type of problem presented by the client may act as an intervening variable. When the type of problem is controlled, the amount of variance explained in the dependent variable increases from 3.5% to 18.1%. Furthermore, several independent variables lose their significance, suggesting that youth, college education and state support are all related to the length of time a case will remain open through the intervening effects of the types of problems presented or service requests made by these clients. In contrast, personal income again appears to have a fairly direct negative correlation with the duration of the case, regardless of the type of problem.

TABLE V

Amount of Time Case Remains Open
in Relation to
Demographic and Socio-economic
Characteristics of Clients

Control Variables	Standardized Coefficients Controlling for Sex, Religion and Language	
	Not Controlling for Problems	Controlling for Problems
SEX	(a)	(a)
RELIGION	.154***	.118***
LANGUAGE	(a)	-.056*
PLACE CHILD	(b)	.155***
PLACE ELDERLY	(b)	-.109***
MARITAL COUNSELLING	(b)	(a)
FAMILY COUNSELLING	(b)	.074**
INDIV COUNSELLING	(b)	.058*
HOMECARE	(b)	.083**
MONITORING	(b)	.199***
HOSPITAL DISCHARGE	(b)	-.161***
YOUTH PROTECTION	(b)	.073**
NEGOTIATION	(b)	.127***
Independent Variables		
ETHNICITY	(a)	-.066*
OLD AGE	(a)	(a)
YOUTH	.080*	(a)
COLLEGE EDUCATION	.063*	(a)
SINGLE PARENT FAMILY	(a)	(a)
LIVING ALONE	(a)	(a)
STATE SUPPORT	.075*	(a)
INACTIVITY	(a)	(a)
PERSONAL INCOME	-.097**	-.067*
Constant	16.566	13.461
R Squared (controls included)	.035	.181

(a) Tolerance = <.60
Significance = <.05
(b) Not in this equation

* significant at .05
** significant at .01
*** significant at .001

The pattern of variables that are statistically significant present a somewhat different picture from that of case complexity. While state support and personal income are, as before, significant factors, old age has no discernable association with case duration at all. Rather youth and college education appear as significant, though the strength of the relationships, like those of state support and income, is very low.

That the young tend to remain in "the system" for longer periods of time is, to a large degree, a reflection of the agency's continuous responsibility for children in placement with foster parents, which is a responsibility that usually lasts years. So far, then, youth would appear to be related to a greater demand on resources more than would old age: the effect of old age is negative in terms of case complexity, and indeterminate in terms of the length of time a case will remain open. Youth, on the other hand, has an indeterminate effect on case complexity, but is positively significant in terms of length of time.

The basis for the significant positive effect of college education is less clear. It indicates that those clients in the sample with a college education or higher tend to remain in the system for a longer period of time.

2

The highly educated are more likely to know how to "work" the system. But the relationship between this factor and the length of time a case remains open is, according to the results printed in Table V, mediated by the types of problems or service requests that the client presents. That is, the more educated a client is, the more likely he or she is to present problems or make service requests that are responded to with long term as opposed to short term help. This finding bears further investigation. If it were found to be generalizable throughout the social service network, it might suggest a critical study of the role of social service centres.

Yet it must be pointed out that the factors of college education, youth, state support and personal income are associated with the length of time a case will remain open only to a minimum extent. With respect to both indicators of demand on resources so far examined, the effect of significant demographic and socio-economic factors is extremely small.

Demand in terms of Repeated Case Openings

With respect to the number of previous case openings, the amount of the variance explained by the independent variables is just 2.3% (Table VI), and controlling for the

types of problems and service requests presented does not reveal any "suppressor" variables intervening. In this case, the types of problems also have very little relation to repeated case openings, as demonstrated by an increase of only 2.4% in the amount of variance explained when problems are included in the regression equation.

In terms of a significant, if not potent pattern that can be discerned, personal income is the only variable to demonstrate a statistically significant effect on repeat case openings. Since this relationship remains steady even when controlling types of problems, it suggests, as with case complexity and duration, a fairly direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Personal income is the one factor that is consistently related to demand on resources across all three dimensions of the variable, and this relationship does not appear to be mediated by the types of problems presented by the clients.

TABLE VI.

Number of Previous Openings
in Relation to
Demographic and Socio-economic
Characteristics of Clients

Standardized Coefficients
Controlling for Sex, Religion and Language

Control Variables	Not Controlling for Problems	Controlling for Problems
SEX	(a)	(a)
RELIGION	.117***	.114***
LANGUAGE	(a)	(a)
PLACE CHILD	(b)	(a)
PLACE ELDERLY	(b)	(a)
MARITAL COUNSELLING	(b)	.164*
FAMILY COUNSELLING	(b)	(a)
INDIV COUNSELLING	(b)	(a)
HOMECARE	(b)	(a)
MONITORING	(b)	.101***
HOSPITAL DISCHARGE	(b)	(a)
YOUTH PROTECTION	(b)	(a)
NEGOTIATION	(b)	.080**
Independent Variables		
ETHNICITY	(a)	(a)
OLD AGE	(a)	(a)
YOUTH	(a)	(a)
COLLEGE EDUCATION	(a)	(a)
SINGLE PARENT FAMILY	(a)	(a)
LIVING ALONE	(a)	(a)
STATE SUPPORT	(a)	(a)
INACTIVITY	(a)	(a)
PERSONAL INCOME	-.118***	-.104**
Constant	1.569	1.345
R Squared (controls included)	.023	.047

(a) Tolerance = $<.60$
Significance = $<.05$
(b) Not in this equation

* significant at .05
** significant at .01
*** significant at .001

The most important finding of the regression analysis has been the consistently small amount of variance accounted for in the extent of demands by all demographic and socio-economic client characteristics considered in the study. With only 2.3% to 5.3% of the variance explained by all demographic and socio-economic factors together, the effect of each is very small indeed.

These findings have some bearing on the problem of developing a model for resource distribution. Focusing on the identification of population groups by their demographic and socio-economic characteristics makes sense only if these characteristics are related to the extent of demand that will be made on an agency's resources. The results of this study suggest that certain demographic and socio-economic characteristics may indeed be related to the variation in extent of demands within a particular agency, but that this relationship is so weak that it does not provide a strong argument for distinguishing groups of clients on the basis of such characteristics.

INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

One of the central arguments for developing a new model for resource distribution between Montreal Social Service Centres has been the following: Certain demographic and socio-economic population characteristics are linked to the need for social services. Each agency's territory can be identified on a scale of "vulnerability" according to the distribution of these characteristics within its population. Those agencies whose territorial populations are most "vulnerable" in this sense, require a greater proportion of available resources than others in order to adequately serve their communities. Therefore, for purposes of resource distribution, territorial populations should be weighted on the basis of these population characteristics. The characteristics that are usually proposed are socio-economic status, measured on a three or five point scale in terms of education and income, and age, favouring both youth (18 years and under) and old age (61 years and older).

While there has been considerable discussion revolving around which population characteristics imply

vulnerability, the logic of this argument has not been seriously disputed. It is taken for granted that a) population characteristics are in fact related to the need for social services, and b) populations defined as "vulnerable" in this sense place greater demands on social service resources.

The present study has examined the relationship between population characteristics and demand on resources within one agency. The results indicate that there is a relationship between some demographic and socio-economic characteristics and the extent of clients' resource demands, but that this association is weak. In this chapter, the implications of the findings will be discussed.

Socio-economic factors have a significant but small effect on the extent of demands that a client will place on the agency's resources. They correlate with the complexity of a client's case, the length of time a case will remain open, and the number of previous case openings a client has had. This correlation remains relatively stable when controlling for demographic factors such as age, family composition and living arrangement, and when controlling for the types of problems presented or services requested by the client.

However, close examination of the results suggests that certain taken-for-granted aspects of the relationship might be questioned. For example, while several indicators of socio-economic status are being considered as a basis for resource distribution, the indicators themselves may not be related to resource demands. "Inactivity", which is one indicator suggested by the Ministry of Social Affairs, appears to have no significant relationship at all. On the other hand; a more direct measure of the degree of an individual's dependency on state support is statistically significant. Likewise, a measure of socio-economic status based on education and income may not be a valid indicator of greater social service needs. If it were, it would be difficult to account for the fact that in this study, low personal income and high education both correlated with greater demands.

Considerable research has gone into validating the education/income indicator of socio-economic status. However, it has been the predictive validity as opposed to the construct validity that has been tested. That is, the predictive ability of the indicator has been demonstrated by the fact that a population group "known" to be of low socio-economic status scores low on the indicator as well (Cote, 1978). But the indicator has not been validated with

respect to the theory in which it is being used; we don't know whether this particular indicator of socio-economic status is valid in terms of predicting social service needs, or even social vulnerability.

There are several possible reasons why income and education may be related in opposite directions to demand on social service resources. As pointed out in the previous chapter, it is not merely a matter of the better educated being able to "work the system". Our analysis has shown that it is the types of problems presented by the highly educated client that account for greater demands on resources. Therefore, it is likely that some social services are oriented to the needs of the highly educated. For example, the highly educated are greatly over-represented in this particular client sample with respect to requesting marital counselling and individual counselling (Artzy and Bayreuther, 1982, pg. 110).

On the other hand, there is an unmediated relationship between personal income and demand. Regardless of the problem, the lower the personal income, the greater the client's resource demands. From these results, it can be concluded that income, but not education, might be a valid, though weak indicator of social service demands.

Of course, this does not imply that the less educated do not need social services more than the highly educated, according to whatever definition of need is adopted. But to propose allocating resources on the basis of that hypothesized need assumes that the less educated will actually use more resources. The present study suggests that within the agency, this is not the case. Further studies relating to the gap between need and use of social services may well reveal similar results at the level of the general population. If so, the assumption that a population whose needs are greater will make greater demands on resources is put into question.

Having determined that state support and personal income have a statistically significant relationship with demand on resources does not necessarily imply that these indicators of socio-economic status are good predictors of resource demand. On the contrary, while they do correlate with demands where "inactivity" and income-plus-education do not, the correlation is extremely weak. At least within the agency, the difference in the extent of resource demands made by those of low SES compared to those of higher SES is very small.

Therefore little support has been lent to the proposal to weight resource allocations on the basis of

socio-economic characteristics, regardless of the indicators of SES used. If poor populations are assumed to make significantly greater demands on resources, then the relationship between poverty and the extent of resource demands would be strong within the client sample, as well. Since it is not strong, the utility of the association as a basis for resource distribution decisions is put into question until further research, focusing on the population as a whole, is undertaken.

The other population variable considered to have an effect on resource demands is age. It is assumed that the relationship between age and vulnerability is curvilinear: that is, that the young and the elderly would be more likely to make greater demands than those in between. There are some data which support this assumption. For example, Artzy and Bayreuther (1982) show that the overall ratio of clients to territorial population in a particular agency is 1:12, while the ratio of clients over the age of 65 to population over the age of 65 is 1:7. This suggests that elderly members of the population are more likely to become clients than others. One of the main reasons for this would be referrals from medical professionals both within affiliated hospitals, convalescent centres and homes for the elderly, and in the community.

Likewise, there are reasons to expect that children and youths would be over-represented as clients with respect to their distribution in the general population. The Social Service Centres have a legislated role to play in the execution of provincial acts pertaining to youth protection and delinquency. For example, they remove children from their homes when necessary, supervise with respect to a "signaled" youth, and counsel young people and/or families who have come to the attention of the authorities.

Within the agency, however, little support for these assumptions has been found. Neither youth nor old age is associated with the likelihood to have a case re-opened several times. The elderly are less likely than others to present more complex cases, in terms of being assessed with a wide constellation of problems and receiving a large variety of services. And there is no statistically significant relationship between old age and the length of time a case will remain open.

With respect to the young, there is no association between youth and case complexity, though there is a slight tendency for young people to present the types of problems or service requests that result in a lengthy period of service requirement. This finding reflects the children in

foster care. However, the natural parents of children in foster care usually receive services as long as the agency is involved with their children. This might account for a diluting of the effect of youth on the length of time a case remains open.

When examined in light of other theoretical and empirical evidence, the findings with respect to old age and especially youth are difficult to assess. A problem related to youth is also related to adults, namely, the youths' families. On the other hand, the adult family members might not have become clients of the agency were it not for their status with respect to the child or youth.

These conditions might have been reflected in the study had it been demonstrated that people living in families were more likely than others to make greater demands on resources. However, it is the clients who live alone who are more likely to present complex cases. Were family clients to have had cases that remained open longer than others, then a negative relation between living alone and the duration of a case would have been found, which it was not. Therefore, the conclusion to be drawn from the present analysis is that, despite the theoretical reasons for expecting young people and their families to make greater demands on the resources of the agency, non-family

individuals are as likely to make similar demands, although for different reasons.

With respect to the elderly, a similar sort of conclusion can be drawn. While it is possible that the elderly are, for various reasons mentioned above, more likely to become social service users than others, it is demonstrated that as clients, they tend to make less, or certainly no greater demands on the resources of the agency than other clients. This suggests that certain assumptions about the relationship between population characteristics and demand on resources bear re-examination.

The needs of the elderly are an important focus of concern in our society, especially as their numbers increase. This concern is reflected in social service policy. Thus various new resources catering to their needs have come into being, and existing social resources have organized in such a manner as to orient their services to these needs. In the case of the Social Service Centres, this orientation responds to government directives as well as prevalent social concerns. The greater tendency of the elderly to be referred for social services may be a reflection of this new orientation. But it does not necessarily imply that their demand on such resources is greater than that of, say, other individuals who live

alone, or others living on a fixed income. Thus when relative demands on resources within an agency are examined, it is found that people living alone, regardless of age, present more complex cases and require a greater number of services than do the elderly as a group.

The implications of these findings with respect to resource distribution are necessarily tentative. Much further research is required. However, this study demonstrates how decisions in the area of social affairs are often made on the basis of what Gilbert Smith (1980) has called "causally active beliefs". Causally active beliefs are assumptions based on untested theories, which may or may not correspond to reality, but serve as a rationale for policy.

In this case, growing evidence of the needs of the elderly has led to the assumption that their needs are in fact greater than those of other sectors of the population. Decisions with respect to resource distribution would be made on the basis of this belief. In the process, funds might be transferred from territories with a very high proportion of families but few elderly people, for example, to territories with a high percentage of elderly in the population. This type of move would result in an increase in services to the elderly, but a

decrease in services for families. If social services have any impact on a community at all, then the impact of such a policy may have significant repercussions.

This study has not been devised to indicate whether the elderly, or any other group, have "greater" needs. What it has suggested is that those elderly individuals who make use of social services do not make greater demands on resources than any other clients. The implication is that even if in fact the needs of the elderly are greater, this need is not necessarily reflected in greater resource demands. In other words, an agency that serves a larger proportion of elderly clients does not require more resources than it would if it served a younger clientele.

The focus of this study has been on the relationship between population characteristics and resource demands. Due to the lack of consensus with respect to the concept of need and the difficulties involved in attempting to measuring relative need, the concept has not been included as an element of the empirical study. Although relative need is not a useful concept, particular needs may indeed be useful variables in further studies of the relationship between population characteristics and resource demands. This possibility is suggested by the finding that particular problems and service requests presented by

clients are highly predictive of the extent of demand on resources.

However, the problems presented and service requested by clients, as they are identified in the questionnaire which provided the data base for this research, are of little use for further elaboration. We have found them suitable for controlling the specificity of needs, so as to indicate where an existing relationship between population characteristics and demands is mediated by particular problems. But an examination of the categories of problems available reveals that they tell us very little about what the particular needs really are. For example, the request for the "monitoring of vulnerable clients" has a significant and strong association with the extent of demand on resources, but this category of request does not indicate the need of the client. Does he or she require monitoring because of a handicap, illness, history of violence, delinquency, abuse or neglect, or simply because of an inability to manage daily living tasks alone? Because the category is so vague, it inevitably includes clients with a wide assortment of demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

The problem of terminology and definitions in social work is one which has been recognized within the agencies

(Artzy and Bayreuther, 1982; Artzy, 1984). This has been a major obstacle to carrying out empirical research into issues of social service delivery. For example, an alternative model for a study of the relationship between population characteristics and demand on resources might focus on the relationship between those characteristics and the likelihood to present a particular problem, which is itself highly predictive of demand. However, if the problems are defined in the vague manner that they have been thus far, then inconsistent and inconclusive results are bound to be obtained.

Therefore, an important task for the social services is to develop a succinct formula for the classification and recording of problems presented, one which reflects the particular needs of the clients. One such formula has been suggested by Rosemary Fitzgerald of the Institute of Psychiatry in London, England. She stresses that "if assessment and measurement of needs, demands, resources and activities in the social work field is to be achieved, social work practitioners, planners, and administrators must recognize the value of systematic data collection carried out at the level of the case record".

7. SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MEDICINE, Vol.12, pp.255-263.

Aside from highlighting certain ~~problems~~ problems related to data collection in the social services, this study has raised questions about the development of a resource distribution model for social service centres, an area where little research has previously been carried out. The assumptions inherent in current proposals have never been the subject of empirical study: Are population characteristics related to social service needs, or social vulnerability? To what degree is the extent of demands on a Social Service Centre's resources determined by the degree of vulnerability of its population?

This study has shown that the relationship between population characteristics and the extent of demands on resources, when examined within the agency, is both unstable and weak. There are two possible implications from these findings: 1) population characteristics are not related to social service needs, or 2) needs are not reflected in the extent of demand that clients make on social services. On the one hand, it would be expected that if old age, for example, implies greater social service needs, then this relationship would manifest itself in the patterns of resource demand within the agency. On the other hand, the relationship would hold within the agency only if social service needs are more or less reflected in patterns of demand. On the basis of the

findings, it may be concluded that one of the two assumptions, or perhaps both, are faulty.

Explanations as to why the relationship between characteristics and demands within the agency is weak has had to remain at the level of speculation. The main reason for this is the lack of data available on which to base further studies, as mentioned above. There are other examples: an examination of factors related to the likelihood of becoming a social service client would be an excellent further test of the utility of population characteristics to predict demand on resources. It would also shed some light on factors that account for the possible gap between need and use. However, such a study calls for a massive data collection process which has not yet been undertaken by the Ministry of Social Affairs, nor any research institute.

Another research task suggested by the current study is the establishment of a degree of construct validity for indicators of social service need or social vulnerability. This would require a definition of vulnerability that accurately reflects the objectives and/or activities of the social service network. For example, it is clear that public services such as welfare and subsidized housing are designed to meet the needs of the poor. However, universal

programs such as medicare and personal social services are designed to respond to the health and social well-being needs of the entire society, on the assumption that the poor, who would not otherwise have access to such services, will have the greatest benefit. On these grounds, it may be inaccurate to define vulnerability in terms of economic dependency. Another criterion, such as the extent of an individual's social, rather than economic support system, might be more useful. Then the validation of indicators of vulnerability would not take place in a theoretical vacuum.

Finally, this study has lead to speculation that patterns of service use, and even patterns of need -- to the extent that these are dependent upon definitions of need -- probably reflect policies and programs more than the policies and programs reflect patterns of use or need. This process works on several levels. Firstly, government policies focus, for political reasons, on particular social problems which are visible to the public, and of concern to all classes of the society: for example, the problems of the elderly, the handicapped, children at risk. These "definitions of the situation" not only lead to the development of programs designed to meet the needs of these particular groups, but also provide the rationale for assuming that such groups are the most vulnerable in our

society.

Secondly, the social work profession itself consists of certain skills and areas of expertise designed to help individuals in their social functioning. Social workers play an enormous role both at the level of accepting a client or referring him or her elsewhere, and at the level of interaction with the clients, in defining the client's needs and in determining the type and extent of service that he or she will receive. But these definitions and decisions are usually determined by the workers' skills and their theoretical training, not by an "objective" assessment of the client's situation. Thus patterns of social service demand reflect the skills and interests of the profession at least as much as they do the situation of the client.

The ongoing establishment of a network of Local Community Service Centres (CLSC's) in Quebec represents an effort on the part of the government to remedy this problem. The staff of the CLSC's is multidisciplinary, that is, it does not consist of social workers alone, but of medical professionals as well, and at times community organizers. This formula is meant to free social service policy from the constraints of the traditional social work profession, at the same time rendering service delivery

more flexible in both the assessment and treatment of clients' problems. The extent to which this works has yet to be examined.⁸ But as long as social services benefit from state support, there is no way to free them from the constraints of government interests. An examination of the numerous mechanisms involved in determining social needs and patterns of social service usage from the top down is of theoretical, if not pragmatic importance.

8. Several academic studies of the CLSC's have been carried out, e.g., by Lemeiux and Turgeon (1979), though they tend to be organizational studies rather than evaluations of the system vis a vis client demands and patterns of use.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was compiled by the in-house research staff of the social service centre which is the focus of the current study. Copies were distributed to 82 social workers of the agency, who were required to complete one for each client registered as of April 19, 1982, or within the data collection period, from April 19 to May 14, 1982.

The first section of the questionnaire (questions 1 to 38) was based in part on similar studies done by other social service centres. The second section was developed in conjunction with the social work staff of the agency.

CLIENT AND SERVICE PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is to be filled out on all registered clients. In those distribution points where the use of registration forms only started in June 1981, clients who still may not be registered must also be included.

1. Client Identification No.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	(1 - 4)
2. Client System No.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	(5 - 8)
3. Card No.					<input type="text"/> (9)
4. Worker No.	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		(10 - 11)
5. Distribution Point:	CSE 1	JCH 5			<input type="text"/> (12)
	FJS 2	JHM 6	JMH 9		
	YCS 3	MMA 7			
	JGH 4	MM 8			
6. Age:	0 - 12 years	1			
	13 - 18 years	2			
	19 - 30 years	3			
	31 - 40 years	4			
	41 - 50 years	5	<input type="text"/> (13)		
	51 - 60 years	6			
	61 - 70 years	7			
	71 years plus	8			
	Not available	9			
7. Sex:	Male	1			
	Female	2	<input type="text"/> (14)		
8. Area of Residence:	Cote des Neiges/Snowdon	01			
	Outremont/TMR	02			
	Centre Ville/Guy Metro Area	03			
	Westmount	04			
	NDG/Montreal West	05			
	Cote St. Luc/Hampstead	06			
	Montreal East	07	<input type="text"/> (15)	<input type="text"/> (16)	
	St. Laurent	08			
	DOO/Lakeshore	09			
	Laval	10			
	Other	88			
	Not Available	99			
9. Civil Status	Single	1			
	Married	2			
	Widowed	3			
	Divorced	4			
	Separated	5	<input type="text"/> (17)		
	Common-Law Union	6			
	Not Available	9			
10. Place of Birth:	Canada	01			
	U.S.A.	02			
	Middle East	03			
	West Indies	04			
	British Isles	05	<input type="text"/> (18)	<input type="text"/> (19)	
	Western Europe	06			
	Eastern Europe	07			
	Africa	08			
	Far East	09			
	Other	88			
	Not Available	99			
11. Language Most Often Spoken at Home:	English	1			
	French	2			
	Yiddish	3			
	Hebrew	4			
	Arabic	5	<input type="text"/> (20)		
	Other	6			
	Not Applicable	7			
	Not Available	9			

12. Education: Highest Level Attained:			
	Primary	1	
	Secondary	2	
	Collegial	3	
	University	4	
	Post Graduate	5	<input type="checkbox"/> (21)
	Not Applicable	6	
	Not Available	9	
13. If Client Employed?	Yes	1	
	No	2	<input type="checkbox"/> (22)
	Not Available	9	
14. If yes:	Full time	1	
	Part time	2	<input type="checkbox"/> (23)
	Not Applicable	3	
15. Occupation:	Sales, Commerce	01	
	Services	02	
	Managerial, Administrative	03	
	Product Fabricating, Repairing, Assembling	04	
	Natural Science, Engineering, Math	05	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	Teaching	06	(24) (25)
	Medicine, Health	07	
	Transport	08	
	Clothing Industry, Manufacturing	09	
	Student	10	
	Not Applicable	11	
	Other	88	
	Not Available	99	
16. If Student:	Full time	1	
	Part time	2	<input type="checkbox"/> (26)
	Not Applicable	3	
	Not Available	9	
17. Principal Source of Revenue:			
	Salary	01	
	Federal Pension	02	
	Welfare	03	
	Veteran's Pension	04	
	OPP	05	
	Unemployment Insurance	06	
	Widow's Pension	07	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	Disability Pension	08	(27) (28)
	Union Pension	09	
	Bursary/Scholarship	10	
	Alliomy	11	
	Savings	12	
	Not Applicable	13	
	Other	88	
	Not Available	99	
18. Annual Income:	Under \$3,000	1	
	\$ 3,000 - \$ 4,999	2	
	\$ 5,000 - \$ 7,999	3	
	\$ 8,000 - \$ 11,999	4	
	\$12,000 - \$14,999	5	<input type="checkbox"/> (29)
	\$15,000 - \$19,999	6	
	\$20,000 and over	7	
	Not Applicable	8	
	Not Available	9	
19. Length of Time in Canada:			
	0 - 6 months	1	
	6 months - 1 year	2	
	1 year - 2 years	3	
	2 years - 4 years	4	
	4 years - 6 years	5	<input type="checkbox"/> (30)
	6 years and more	6	
	Not Available	9	

20. Length of Time in Montreal:	0 - 6 months	1	
	6 months - 1 year	2	
	1 year - 2 years	3	
	2 years - 4 years	4	<input type="checkbox"/> (31)
	4 years - 6 years	5	
	6 years and more	6	
	Not Available	9	
21. Living Arrangement:	Alone	1	
	With Parents	2	
	With Spouse	3	
	With Spouse and Family	4	
	With Other Family	5	<input type="checkbox"/> (32)
	Friend/Companion	6	
	With Family	7	
	Other	8	
Not Available	9		
22. Type of Residence:	Own Home	1	
	Apartment	2	
	Apartment Hotel	3	
	Centre d'Accueil	4	
	Institution (other than C.A.)	5	<input type="checkbox"/> (33)
	Foster Home	6	
	Other	7	
	Not Available	9	
23. Number of Children in Family:	0	1	
	1	2	
	2	3	
	3	4	
	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> (34)
	5 and over	6	
	Not Available	9	
24. Ages of Children in Family: (First Four Children)	0 - 12 years	1	
	13 - 18 years	2	<input type="checkbox"/> (35)
	19 - 30 years	3	
	31 - 40 years	4	<input type="checkbox"/> (36)
	41 - 50 years	5	
	51 - 60 years	6	<input type="checkbox"/> (37)
	61 years & over	7	
Not Applicable	8	<input type="checkbox"/> (38)	
Not Available	9		
25. Location of Children: (First Four Children)	Montreal	1	
	Rest of Canada	2	<input type="checkbox"/> (39)
	United States	3	<input type="checkbox"/> (40)
	Other	4	<input type="checkbox"/> (41)
	Not Applicable	5	<input type="checkbox"/> (42)
	Not Available	9	
26. Family Composition (where applicable):	Intact	1	
	Single Parent	2	
	Blended	3	
	Intergenerational	4	<input type="checkbox"/> (43)
	Other	5	
	Not Applicable	6	
	Not Available	9	
27. What are the Client's Two Most Important Support Networks?	Relatives	1	
	Friends	2	
	Neighbours	3	
	Religious Organization	4	<input type="checkbox"/> (44)
	Social Group	5	
	Health	6	
	Agency	7	<input type="checkbox"/> (45)
	Other	8	
	Not Available	9	

28. Ethnic Group:	Asian	01	
	British	02	
	French	03	
	Italian	04	
	Greek	05	
	Middle Eastern	06	
	Moroccan	07	
	West Indian	08	<input type="checkbox"/>
	German	09	<input type="checkbox"/> (46) <input type="checkbox"/> (47)
	Polish	10	
	Russian	11	
	Israeli	12	
	Hungarian	13	
	Canadian	14	
	American	15	
	Other	98	
	Not Available A	99	
29. Religion:	Catholic	1	
	Protestant	2	
	Hebrew	3	
	Other	4	<input type="checkbox"/> (48)
	Not Available	9	
30. If Client is Disabled, is it:	Physical	1	
	Intellectual	2	
	Both	3	
	Other	4	<input type="checkbox"/> (49)
	Not Applicable	5	
	Not Available	9	
31. Number of Beneficiaries in Client System:	1	1	
	2	2	
	3	3	
	4	4	<input type="checkbox"/> (50)
	5 plus	5	
32. Source of Referral:	Self	1	
	Family	2	
	Friend/Neighbour	3	
	Doctor	4	
	Teacher	5	
	Police	6	
	Other	7	<input type="checkbox"/> (51)
	Nurse	8	
	Social Worker	9	
33. Presenting Problem/Service Request:		Yes	No
01	Placement of child or adolescent	1	2
02	Placement of elderly	1	2
03	Placement of an adult	1	2
04	Marital counselling	1	2
05	Family counselling	1	2
06	Individual counselling	1	2
07	Request for legal protection of youth	1	2
08	Request for legal protection of elderly	1	2
09	Request for legal protection of adults	1	2
10	Home care	1	2
11	Financial and material help	1	2
12	Adoption	1	2
13	Information/Legal	1	2
14	Professional Expertise/Consultation	1	2
15	Help to find lodging	1	2
16	Help to find employment/workshop	1	2
17	Psycho-social assessment	1	2
18	Request for access to record	1	2
19	Monitor vulnerable clients	1	2
20	Discharge planning	1	2
21	System work and negotiation on behalf of client	1	2
	(a) direct intervention eg. mediation	1	2
	(b) indirect intervention eg. forms	1	2
22	Undesired pregnancy	1	2

34. Primary Service Requested if More than One:
Give number from previous list

35. Is this Situation: Long standing 1
Recent in onset 2
Not Applicable 3

36. How Long has this Case been Open?
0 - 4 months 1
4 - 6 months 2
6 - 12 months 3
12 - 18 months 4
18 - 24 months 5
2 years plus 6

37. How Long do you Expect this Case to Remain Open?
0 - 4 months 1
4 - 6 months 2
6 - 12 months 3
12 - 18 months 4
18 - 24 months 5
2 years plus 6

38. Is this Client: A primary client 1
Resource person 2
Other 3

(75) (76)

(77)

(78)

(79)

(80)

1. Client Identification No.

(1 - 4)

2. Card No.

2 (5)

3. Target Problem(s) After Assessment:

	Yes	No
01 Financial Problem	1	2
02 Employment/Workshop Problem	1	2
03 Lodging Problem	1	2
04 Problem Related to Physical Illness	1	2
05 Problem Related to Physical Handicap	1	2
06 Problem Related to Intellectual Handicap (Retardation)	1	2
07 Problem Related to Mental Handicap (organic)	1	2
08 School Problem	1	2
09 Marital Problem	1	2
10 Legal Problem	1	2
11 Transportation Problem	1	2
12 Behavioural Problem	1	2
13 Non-Desired Pregnancy	1	2
14 Addiction (drugs and alcohol)	1	2
15 High Risk Pregnancy	1	2
16 Abandoned Elderly	1	2
17 Problems Related to Adoption	1	2
18 Problem Related to Loss	1	2
19 Problems Related to Psychological Difficulty	1	2
20 Problems Related to Institutional Living	1	2
21 Problem in Family Relationships	1	2
22 Problem Related to Social Interaction	1	2
23 Difficulty Living on Own	1	2
24 Difficulty Living in a New City/Country	1	2
25 Emotional/Physical Abuse of Partners	1	2
26 Problem Negotiating with Formal Organization	1	2
27 Problem Related to Social Integration	1	2
28 Article 38-A	1	2
29 Article 38-B	1	2
30 Article 38-C	1	2
31 Article 38-D	1	2
32 Article 38-E	1	2
33 Article 38-F	1	2
34 Article 38-G	1	2
35 Article 38-H	1	2
36 Article 38-I	1	2
37 Article 40	1	2
38 Monitoring Vulnerable Clients	1	2
39 Discharge Planning	1	2
40 Sexual Problem	1	2

(6)

(7)

(8)

(9)

(10)

(11)

(12)

(13)

(14)

(15)

(16)

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(33)

(34)

(35)

(36)

(37)

(38)

(39)

(40)

(41)

(42)

(43)

(44)

(45)

4.	Primary Target Problem - if More than One: Give Number from Previous List			<input type="text"/> (46)	<input type="text"/> (47)
5.	If you Checked More than One Problem, is it a Multi-Problem Situation:	Yes	1		
		No	2	<input type="text"/> (48)	
6.	Present Unit of Intervention:	Individual	1		
		Couple	2		
		Family	3	<input type="text"/> (49)	
		Group	4		
7.	Services Received:	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		
01	Intake assessment of psycho-social situation in relation to illness/disability/problem	1	2	<input type="text"/> (50)	
02	Preparation of formal psycho-social assessments for presentation to admissions committees, protection committees, team, etc.	1	2	<input type="text"/> (51)	
03	Crisis intervention - mobilization, psychological and/or concrete resources, ensuring the safety and protection of the client	1	2	<input type="text"/> (52)	
04	Provision of information regarding resources, hospital procedures, policies, expectations and programs	1	2	<input type="text"/> (53)	
05	Guidance, direction and counselling to help patient/family with illness/disability problem	1	2	<input type="text"/> (54)	
06	Clarification and interpretation of the treatment plan	1	2	<input type="text"/> (55)	
07	Enable and support clients to sustain the identified goals developed in the treatment plan	1	2	<input type="text"/> (56)	
08	Ongoing supportive interventions to assure and educate the patient/client/family in daily living tasks	1	2	<input type="text"/> (57)	
09	To assure the monitoring and maintenance of marginally functioning individuals living in the community, eg. psychiatric patients, waiting lists, vulnerable elderly	1	2	<input type="text"/> (58)	
10	Locating and negotiating resources and making practical arrangements re concrete needs, eg. financial, employment, home-care	1	2	<input type="text"/> (59)	
11	Locating and negotiating resources for placement (short and long term)	1	2	<input type="text"/> (60)	
12	Assuring the optimal use of these resources	1	2	<input type="text"/> (61)	
13	Acting as liaison between institution and institutional staff	1	2	<input type="text"/> (62)	
14	Acting as liaison between institutional staff and patient/client/family	1	2	<input type="text"/> (63)	
15	Interpreting problems of social situation as they relate to the medical condition/disability/problem or use of agency/institutional staff	1	2	<input type="text"/> (64)	
16	Referral to other agency/facility	1	2	<input type="text"/> (65)	
17	Advocating on behalf of client to CSS system, eg. concerning length of stay, hospital's approach to patients	1	2	<input type="text"/> (66)	
18	Advocating on behalf of client to host setting, eg. concerning length of stay, setting's approach to patients	1	2	<input type="text"/> (67)	

7. Services Received (continued.....)		Yes	No	
19	Advocating on behalf of client to outside agencies, i.e. to secure services, eligibility	1	2	<input type="checkbox"/> (68)
20	Discharge planning	1	2	<input type="checkbox"/> (69)
21	Discharge follow-up	1	2	<input type="checkbox"/> (70)
8. Did you Contract with Your Client Including Number of Sessions and Time Frame?				
	Yes		1	
	No		2	<input type="checkbox"/> (71)
9. Did you Establish Goals with your Client?				
	Yes		1	
	No		2	<input type="checkbox"/> (72)
10. What was the Original Reason for the Agency's Involvement with the Client:				
	Referred for or requesting a specific service		1	
	Referred for or requesting help with specific problem or problem area		2	
	Referred for or requesting a specific service and requesting help with a specific problem		3	<input type="checkbox"/> (73)
	Signalement		4	
11. Number of Previous Openings:				
	0		1	
	1		2	
	2		3	
	3		4	<input type="checkbox"/> (74)
	4 or more		5	
12. Did the Client Receive the Service They Requested?				
	Yes		1	
	No		2	<input type="checkbox"/> (75)
13. Was an Alternative Service Given?				
	Yes		1	
	No		2	<input type="checkbox"/> (76)
14. Did the Service Given Meet the Needs of the Client?				
	Yes		1	
	No		2	
	Somewhat		3	<input type="checkbox"/> (77)
15. In your Opinion Would your Client Concur?				
	Yes		1	
	No		2	<input type="checkbox"/> (78)
16. Has or Will the Interventions Given Improve the Situation:				
	Not at all		1	
	Minimally		2	
	Reasonably well		3	<input type="checkbox"/> (79)
	Greatly		4	
17. Is this Client:				
	New		1	
	Carried Over		2	<input type="checkbox"/> (80)

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