

colleges, meanwhile, there was an 11.1-point increase. The women's colleges also did better in raising social self-confidence, according to the authors' analysis. However, "having a high proportion of female faculty in an institution was not a significant predictor of women students' self-reported ability," Kim and Alvarez note.

The students at women's colleges, they suggest, have fewer distractions from academi-

ic study and more opportunities to become "actively involved in student organizations [and] to exercise leadership." While women at the coed colleges seem to have acquired more "practical, job-related skills" (the women's schools stress the liberal arts), that advantage may be insignificant in the long run. Graduates of women's colleges, the authors note, continue to outnumber their sisters in *Who's Who of American Women*.

The Perils of Success

"The Effect of Employment and Training Programs on Entry and Exit from the Welfare Caseload"
by Robert A. Moffitt, in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (Winter 1996), Univ. of Pennsylvania, 3620 Locust Walk, Ste. 3100, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104-6372.

Conservatives have delighted for years in pointing out the unanticipated consequences of liberal social programs. Now, it appears that some measures dear to conservative hearts might have some unanticipated consequences of their own. Take the most dearly held conviction of the new consensus on welfare policy: that job training programs will move the poor off welfare and into private-sector jobs, thus shrinking the welfare rolls.

What few of the experts seem to have considered, argues Moffitt, an economist at Johns Hopkins University, is that the more such efforts succeed, the more poor people likely will be attracted to welfare. That would be fine if the main object is to help poor people improve their skills and get jobs,

but not if it is simply to shrink the welfare rolls. Ironically, the best way to discourage welfare might be to require recipients to participate in job training efforts that are ineffective. Moffitt uses a simulation model of welfare participation to illustrate the various possibilities.

The last major federal overhaul of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1988 required the states to set up so-called Job Opportunities and Basic Skills programs, but set only modest goals for participation. More than half of adult AFDC recipients are ordinarily exempt from job-training requirements for various reasons. The more hard-nosed approach now favored by many political leaders might produce surprising results.

PRESS & MEDIA

Assessing 'Public Journalism'

"From the Citizen Up" by Mark Jurkowitz, in *Forbes MediaCritic* (Winter 1996), P.O. Box 762, Bedminster, N.J. 07921.

"Public journalism" is the latest fad in the newspaper business. No one is quite sure what the phrase means, but a good many editors are trying to put it into practice anyway, apparently hoping to win over disenchanting readers with an upbeat display of journalistic good citizenship.

Proponents such as Jay Rosen, director of New York University's Project on Public Life and the Press, believe that public journalism can "improve democracy," while critics such as Max Frankel, the former executive editor of the *New York Times*, worry that the press could end up

compromising its traditional mission and itself. Jurkowitz, ombudsman for the *Boston Globe*, examines four of the roughly 200 "public journalism" projects launched in recent years.

- The *San Jose Mercury News* published a lengthy investigative series last year on corruption in the California State Assembly. Then it "formed a brigade of about 30 activists who visited Sacramento, grilled state legislators, attended lobbying training seminars, and tracked bills and campaign contributions." Jurkowitz lauds the reporting, but questions the second

step, which took the paper over “the line from objectivity to advocacy.”

- The 39,000-circulation *Grand Forks* (N.D.) *Herald* “embarked on a ‘Community Conversation’ with its readers via coffee klatches, focus groups, and polls,” and even lent an editor to the local Chamber of Commerce to work on its similar project. “By opening lines of communication, the *Herald* benefited both citizens and the community,” Jurkowitz writes, but the paper should have kept the business group at arm’s length.

- The *Spokane Spokesman-Review* “offered free pizza to the 1,500 residents who gathered in backyards to discuss what they liked and didn’t like about where they lived,” then hired a consultant to turn their ideas into a lengthy report on the future of eastern Washington. To finance the \$75,000 project, the newspaper contributed \$30,000 and, in the words of a top editor, “went out, hat in hand to the banks, the movers and the shakers,” to raise the rest. This, observes Jurkowitz, “put the newspaper in the awkward position of having local, downtown powers finance a

newspaper project that directly affects their interests.”

- After two police officers in Charlotte, North Carolina, were shot while pursuing a suspect, the *Charlotte Observer* launched Taking Back Our Neighborhoods, an ongoing project that in a series of articles took an in-depth look at the city’s most crime-ridden areas. Reporters produced “some of the most unflinching, detailed urban reporting in recent memory,” Jurkowitz says. The *Observer* also formed a partnership with United Way of the Central Carolinas, which funneled hundreds of volunteers into the blighted areas. City hall and some private businesses also took some actions. “The paper’s effort fell within the bounds of legitimate, if rare, newspaper advocacy and philanthropy,” Jurkowitz says, noting the *New York Times*’ annual Yuletide appeal in behalf of the city’s neediest. The *Observer*’s project “galvanized an entire city and fueled the effort to improve blighted urban areas”—the kind of response, he concludes, that “provides the most persuasive argument for encouraging public journalism.”

Anything for a Buck

“The TV Tabs’ New Tone” by Frank Houston, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (Jan.-Feb. 1996), 700 Journalism Bldg., Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027.

Something almost as strange as an Elvis sighting has been happening at TV’s sleazy “tabloid” news programs, reports Houston, an editor at *Columbia Journalism Review*. As a recent commercial for *A Current Affair*—showing a dump truck rumbling through a suburban neighborhood, then plunging off a cliff—explains, “We took out the trash.”

Syndicated shows such as *A Current Affair*, *American Journal*, and *Inside Edition* have shifted their focus from gossip to investigative journalism, Houston says. While Hollywood gossip is still doled out by *Extra* and *Entertainment Tonight*, and Viacom’s top-rated *Hard Copy* is sticking with its entertainment-and-sensation recipe, the other TV tabloids have begun “digging up consumer fraud and rooting out political misdeeds with the same zeal they once applied to stories about topless donut shops and Joey Buttafuoco.” *A Current Affair*, which is a decade old and the original TV tab, has lured a new anchor away from

Dateline NBC, established a Washington bureau, hired 20 new investigative staff members, and (television being television) launched a \$4 million marketing campaign to introduce its new look. King World’s *Inside Edition*, begun in 1988, always presented some investigative pieces, but in recent years it has had a lot more of them, and some—notably a series about a flaw in the rear-door latch of Chrysler minivans—have had an impact.

The shift to investigative reporting, Houston says, has to do with ratings and demographics. *A Current Affair* began remaking its image after finishing a distant third in the ratings race last year. The syndicated TV tabloids are seen by an estimated audience of more than 20 million people, but advertisers, who want to target affluent viewers likely to purchase their products, “are increasingly looking beyond pure ratings numbers.” So—for the moment at least—the TV tabs have found “religion.”