BARBARA SOLOMON
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Interviewed by Frances Lomas Feldman
in Dr. Feldman's Office
Note: the interviews extended over three sessions:
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FELDMAN: This interview with Dr. Barbara Solomon is being done at this time for two

purposes: one is the Archives of the University of Southern California's Social Welfare Archives,

and for the School of Social Work which is now celebrating its 75th birthday. One reason to

celebrate is Barbara Solomon herself, and so I will ask you, Barbara, if you will start by telling us

what your background is, how you came into social work, why, and then about your role in this

profession.

SOLOMON: The timing is really quite elegant because I just realized that this year, 1995, marks

the 30th year since I was made a career teacher here at the University of Southern California. It

was the last year of my doctoral program, and at that time, I had no knowledge that there was any

opportunity for me to join the faculty of the School of Social Work. Entering the doctoral

program, we were all told that the School would not hire its own graduates; that this was a

traditional policy in universities, not to hire their own graduates, which we called the incest rule.

And so I really believed that my teaching career would be elsewhere. However, I think my

choices, in terms of a career, have always seemed to be based more on the opportunities of the

moment rather than on long-range planning.

When I went off to undergraduate school quite young, at 15, I thought I wanted to be a

psychiatrist. Having grown up in a totally segregated community in the South, in Houston,

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Texas, one might ask what did I know about psychiatry. The answer is absolutely nothing but what I had read or perhaps seen in the movies, but the idea of being a professional who dealt with people who were emotionally disturbed and somehow being able to help them to manage their lives, seemed to be an exciting kind of career. I barely understood, at that time, that I needed to go to medical school in order to be a psychiatrist. When I arrived at Howard University and indicated my career goals, I was told by the counselors there that, of course, I would have to go to medical school first, and so they began helping me to develop my course schedule, my schedule of classes, on that basis. Of course, that meant taking elementary laboratory courses in the biological sciences, and one of my problems has been that I have never been able to see anything under a microscope, having worn glasses since the first day I entered a classroom, and they discovered I couldn't see the blackboard. I wore very thick-lensed glasses then, and somehow attributed, perhaps, to my need for lenses, the reason that I never saw anything under a microscope. It was very clear that with all those lab classes, I was at a distinct disadvantage, and I began almost immediately to rethink my career goals. My counselor suggested that perhaps psychology, clinical psychology, might be an opportunity where I could do something similar without having to go to medical school. So I changed my major to psychology. But at that time the psychology department at Howard was extremely experimentally-oriented. Freud was discussed only in the history of psychology, not as anyone who had any contemporary significance. I learned an awful lot about physiological psychology, I learned a lot about animal behavior, I learned a lot about stimulus response kinds of mechanisms; ran rats through mazes, but hardly anything, I thought, about people. I was very concerned about whether I really wanted to be a clinical psychologist since I was not getting much interest or advice from the department

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at the time; not even in terms of what a minor ought to be. I was left to my own devices and I took course very broadly in the social sciences. As my senior year started, I thought maybe I should take a course in social work since someone had told me that psychiatric social work was an alternative to psychology. The first semester of my senior year I took an introductory course in social work, in the School of Social Work, that was offered for undergraduates there, at Howard, and actually thought I really liked what I was hearing. I liked the kinds of things that social workers would be doing. It occurred to me that maybe social work was the profession for me.

I sent of for the catalog at UC Berkeley, which is an area where I had many relatives, where my mother had gone to graduate school. I thought graduate school at the Berkeley School of Social Welfare might be for me. When I got the application materials, one of the things that I saw immediately was that I needed a year of economics. I had had none, and this came right after registration for my last semester in my senior year. I prevailed upon the Economics Department to let me take both semesters of economics in my final semester, in order that I would be eligible to get into Berkeley. What I didn't realize, later, was that the waiver that they had to give me in order to admit me to Berkeley, was actually in terms of my age. I was graduating from undergraduate school at age 19, and 21 was usually the minimal age for entering the Master's program in social welfare. Somehow, that requirement had escaped me and it was only much later that I learned that they had been less concerned about my economics course than they were about my age.

Actually, as I look back now, they had a right to do that because, I think, I went into social work education very naive about the profession. I was asked to make a decision in my

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application about whether I wanted casework or group work. I had no real understanding of the difference. More importantly, I certainly had no idea that at that time that the choice would actually determine, almost irrevocably, the course of my career. As I look back, the only thing I can think of that influenced my decision to put casework instead of group work, was that the summer before I entered my senior year at Howard, I had been a volunteer at a community center near my home, and I had been a volunteer in a program for inter-city youths, and those kids had given me such a fit, I decided that if that was group work, I must want casework (Laughter), and so I checked casework.

The graduate program at Berkeley was very interesting at that time. Actually, I arrived at Berkeley the year after Erik Erickson left the faculty. He'd been on the faculty until that previous year, but his influence was very, very great and it was somewhat ironic, given the direction the School has taken in later years. But at that time if was very Freudian. Erickson was almost seen as someone radically different. Now we would put them very much in the same ideological bag, but at that time, psychoanalytic theory was very much the basic fundamental theory of practice for social work education at Berkeley.

The first year was generic, and we were to choose our specialization. It was also the last gasp of the specialization era in social work education. I had to choose, in my second year, a specialization. I had entered with the notion of becoming a psychiatric social worker, but my parents had made it very clear that after having made a lot of sacrifice to send me to undergraduate school and get a degree--I had a younger sister who was then in as an undergraduate--that I needed very badly to get financial support for my graduate education. I had gone to Berkeley with absolutely no financial support. That first semester, no one at the time I

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had applied, indicated to me that I was eligible for any kind of financial assistance. I look back now, especially having spent some time as a graduate dean, knowing how important financial support is for graduate students, and especially minority students who very often have not had access to the kind of information about what is available. So, I know what kind of a disadvantage I was in at Berkeley at that time. I had been a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Howard. I graduated with something like a 3.8 grade point average, but not one offer of graduate support of any kind had ever been made to me, and it was only after I got to Berkeley, that I discovered that almost everybody else in the program had had a fellowship of some kind. I did ask my advisor, who indicated that perhaps there was a possibility of getting financial support in my second semester with a Vocational Rehabilation fellowship that had just come down, that the Federal Government had just made available, and Berkeley had access to it. But I would have to commit to a specialization in medical social work. At that point, that did not seem to me to be that much different. Obviously, if I was going to be supported, I signed on the bottom line that I would specialize in medical social work. My second semester, I started receiving a stipend from Vocational Rehab. Ironically, that summer, between my first and second year, when I was back home in Houston, I received a letter from the University indicating that the Nixon Administration had done away with the program that had supported the voc rehab fellowship, and so it would not be forthcoming for the next year. However, I was urged to come back for my second year with the assurance that the School would do everything that they could to try to find support for me. Of course, you can imagine that by that time, all of the available fellowships had already been allocated for the second year.

FELDMAN: Were there many minority students there?

SOLOMON: No, there were approximately 100 in my cohort and there were two minority students. Two minority students. Both of us, by the way, had come from Howard together. We were friends, and we'd both decided to come to the School of Social Work at Berkeley at the same time; and we were the only minority students.

FELDMAN: There was no special effort made to help the two minority students with fellowships?

SOLOMON: None. None whatsoever. And as I said, when I look back now, I see there is a certain level of expectation that has to be achieved before you even push the system. As I look back now, if at the time I had applied, and I had said very forcefully that I cannot come to graduate studies without some kind of support, I truly believe that at the time I would have been offered some. But I did not know that the support was there. No one had ever spoken with me as an undergraduate, about graduate education, not even in the psychology department. It's interesting; you would think that Howard, as a minority institution, would have been much more sensitive. But when I look back at my graduating class and the psychology majors who went on to graduate school, they were all men. I think it was not only that I was female, but I was also very young at the time I was taking these course. I'm not sure that my faculty, even the ones who may have been giving me As in courses, thought of me as a potential faculty member, and obviously a doctorate, a Ph.D., is a union card for university teaching, and so on. I just don't think in their minds they even thought of me. I was a young girl. In fact, one of the males in my class went on to be not only a very distinguished psychologist, but he became president of CCNY (City College of New York). It's not as if the faculty had not been aware of our graduate opportunities, but certainly it was nothing that was an automatic thing that you would be exposed

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to and learn. There had to be the pressure.

I'm sure that perhaps some students who had come from families who had a background in higher education for many generations, or for several generations, may have known more than I did about that. Both of my parents had been the first in their respective families to go to college. My father was there only two years. My mother went on to graduate. My mother was the youngest of 14, and was the only one of the 14 who graduated from high school, much less gone on to college. This was because a relative had seen something in her and told her parents that he wanted to send her to college. We didn't push the system, although later both of us received support; it was nothing that we had demanded at the point that we were admitted to the program. By the way, the other student, my friend, had also been Phi Beta Kappa, and in fact, had gotten a foreign travel award right after our graduation, so that right after she came back from Europe, she came to Berkeley where we entered the School of Social Work. She went on to get a doctorate in social work from Catholic University. I think that there was no question that we were qualified to get that kind of support, but it was just not there. And as I said, we were the only minority students in the first-year class. The next year there was one. In the two years that we were in the program at Berkeley, there were only three minority students out of 200 students; 100 in each year's class. That was the number that they usually admitted.

As I said, I fell into medical social work not because it was something I had even aspired to in the beginning, but because that was where support was. My parents were very concerned that I was going all the way back to Berkeley without knowing whether I was going to be able to afford to stay in school. Actually, my father was a Pullman porter, so the trip, the travel, was not difficult because he got passes. Before I left, I had already arranged to stay in International

House that second year and, of course, my fellowship was going to make it possible for me to pay to stay in International House. I arrived in International House not knowing at all how I was going to be able to pay (laughter) my room and board in this place. Sure enough, when I got there, my advisor indicated that they weren't sure yet what they were going to do, but they were certainly working hard on it, and they were going to try to do something before the end of the registration period when I would have to come with tuition and room and board at International House. And they did. It was very interesting. They were able to get the Alameda County Lung Association to agree to provide me with a fellowship for that year. They had asked--there were actually four of us who had been dropped form the vocational rehab program--and for two of us, they had not yet found fellowships. We were able to be supported by agencies that they had contacted. The Alameda Lung Association, I will not forget for two reasons. One was that they absolutely did not state a dollar amount; they said, tell us what your expenses are for the year, and that is what we will meet. What you have to do is tell us what you need for your room and board, for your transportation, for you books, and all of that, and that's what we will commit to. So that's what I had to do, and it was wonderful.

FELDMAN: An early lesson in budgeting.

SOLOMON: Absolutely, and it was really wonderful. It evidently had to pass their board and it did, I was asked to go down and meet the chairman of the board, and they would give me a check. That's essentially what happened. I will not forget that because this chairman of their board was the president of a major insurance company. When I got to his office, they told me to go on in the office, that he was on the telephone, but that he would be off shortly and would talk to me. So I went in and I took a seat before this man, and he--a very, very patrician looking man,

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probably early 50s, with a clearly East Coast kind of accent, which probably, if I had known as much then as I do now, I would have said Boston. At any rate--he was talking on the phone to someone about an employee applicant--I think it was an applicant or someone that they wanted or were considering bringing into the company. He was making it clear that he just wouldn't do. Maybe the time would come at some later point that they would take somebody who was Jewish, but it wasn't yet that time. And he, the person on the other end, seemed to be trying to support this person being brought into the company, and the president was saying, no, when I go over our client list and I look at who we are serving, I will just have to tell you that this is not the time to bring somebody Jewish into the organization. And I'm sitting there....

FELDMAN: Had he known that you were a minority member?

SOLOMON: He certainly saw it--I was sitting right in front of him.

FELDMAN: But he hadn't known before.

SOLOMON: Probably not. And I was sitting there listening to this conversation, and he was not at all, apparently--how should I put it?--it didn't seem to him that he had anything to apologize for in this kind of conversation. He didn't, in the least, try to cover up the fact that this is the kind of statement he was making. He must have been on the phone for about ten minutes before he hung it up. He apologized for keeping me waiting, but he certainly didn't apologize for having, you know, and I'm kind of sitting there somewhat stunned that he was so....

FELDMAN: What did you think in terms of yourself when you listened to him?

SOLOMON: When I was listening to this, I was thinking I'm sure glad that he is seeing for the first time who I am, because if not, I might not be getting this award. I mean, it was very clear because he was a very smooth person and he congratulated me on my academic achievements, my

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performance; they had looked at my file and it was really stellar and they were therefore really pleased to be able to do this for the school, etcetera; they felt very positive about the Lung Association. Some of their most prized staff were out of the UC School of Social Welfare and so they felt very good about that and that was one of the reasons that our alums had done more to give the school credit.

I had my second year support, and it certainly began to open up for me at that time. I was not yet 21, but I was already, I think, experiencing what the real world was like out there. At the time I graduated, my intention was to be the best clinical social worker I could be. I never really thought much beyond that. If someone had pushed me at that time to say, "Well, what are your long-range career goals? What do you think you might be doing 20 years from now?" I might have said, well, I think I might be the director of an agency or something. I would want it to be a very fine agency. And I would talk about--so perhaps administration might have been in the back of my head. But, certainly, not teaching at that point.

Maybe I can back up a little bit to say that my mother was a teacher, and I had always said I didn't want to do it. We had been introduced to Berkeley, my sister and I, very young because my mother did graduate work during the summer; she came to summer school at Berkeley to get a certificate, because we had cousins who lived in Richmond and we could stay with our cousins and she could commute to the campus and take classes. At those times, I always read everything in sight, and I would pick up her education textbooks and I thought they were the most boring things that I had ever seen in my life. I announced that never was I going to go to a school of education. I therefore said, I won't teach. Because of this I never really thought about teaching, even at the university level.

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When I got out, when I graduated, I came back to Houston and was hired at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Houston. And let me tell you about that because during that period between my first and second year, when the school had to inform me that I did not have funding the next year, they told me you do have the possibility of two additional VA placements. There four of you, but we only have two VA placements, and you have to be interviewed by the director of social service at a VA hospital in your area. They gave me the telephone number of the chief of social work services at the VA Hospital in Houston. I called the hospital immediately to get an appointment. She was on vacation. I didn't get a chance to talk to her until about, maybe almost two weeks after. I had been asked by the school to get in touch with her immediately for an interview. I did go in for the interview and after a long interview, she indicated that she'd write a very good letter of recommendation for me, but by that time, they'd already made the placement. So I didn't get her--I mean--I didn't get the VA placement. When I went back to Houston after I had gotten my degree, and I was thinking about where I wanted to work, and I had come out of medical social work, someone told me that the M. B. Anderson Cancer Hospital is looking for a medical social worker, so you should apply there. I arranged to go in for an interview with the chief of social work service at M. B. Anderson. Again, I got the impression talking to him-- because he commented on it so much--that I probably wouldn't get it because I was terribly young, and he seemed to be quite concerned that somebody as young as I was would be considering coming to work in that environment; a cancer hospital with many elderly people who are terminally ill. Even whether I ought to, even if I wanted to, seemed to be his attitude. I went away from there feeling that I certainly wouldn't get that job.

The next day I had a phone call and it was from the chief of social work services, VA. He

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said, "I understand you are looking for a job, and you were actually being interviewed at M. B. Anderson. I would have thought that since I had talked to you, you would have contacted me when you came back to town because we have openings here at the VA." And I said I certainly would consider it. I went in and was interviewed and was hired almost immediately at VA Hospital, which had just desegragated its hospital two years before. They had hired their first African-American social worker that same year that the hospital was desegragated. She was the wife of a faculty member at Purview College, which was an historically Black college right near there, and when her husband was transferred there, she had been in the VA system for some time. She applied for a transfer and she only stayed one year, and she was not there when I came to the staff. It was a teaching hospital, and it was not long before I had students. The social work service department actually had students from three different schools of social work: from University of Texas at Austin, from Our Lady of the Lake in San Antonio, the School of Social Work in San Antonio, and LSU. All of these schools had block-placement plans so that students were sent there for a block of time. They were there almost the same hours that any other staff were there, and then they had course work before and after. So, I became a field instructor for the University of Texas, the second year that I working there at VA in Houston. I enjoyed it thoroughly. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching.

FELDMAN: It was a different kind of education.

SOLOMON: It was a different kind of education, absolutely. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Then the faculty at the University of Texas started talking to me about going back and getting a doctorate. They had no minority faculty at the time, and they indicated that they would certainly be interested in my joining the faculty in Austin if I would go back and get a doctorate. I was not

really that enthusiastic at the time, because Austin was not a city that I thought I wanted to move to. The notion of going back for the doctorate was not as much of a concern as the thought that what they were really trying to say was that I should move back to Austin. Austin, even at time, was not the bright lights of the big city, and I had always lived in a city, and Austin was a very small town.

FELDMAN: You weren't married then?

SOLOMON: Not yet. I started working at VA at in 1958, and I was married in 1961. I was married three years after I started the field instruction at the University of Texas, got married, and we moved to California. I transferred to the VA Hospital here, at Wadsworth, and made one of the conditions of my accepting their offer, that I would be able to have students. I had found that to be such an important part of my job, that I wanted to continue the opportunity to do that.

Actually, Wadsworth had not had students for a few years, and they said that they hadn't had anyone on the staff who had wanted them, or they didn't have the time, or whatever, so they arranged with UCLA to take students again. I became the field instructor there, and continued to love it and found myself looking forward to the time, as if I was marking time from when the students left until they came back again, and then began to think why should you do what you really love, part time? Why not do it full time? Of course, by then, I had a much better grasp of what being a faculty member at a university was like, at least in a school of social work. I talked to my husband. We had a baby about six months old at the time that I was making this decision: should I go back to school or not? He had just taken a new job. I said, "You know, it's really going to be better for us because we want kids, and I can't see myself staying at home all day just taking care of kids." That was not me. Being on a university faculty should give me a great deal

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more flexibility in terms of parenting than having a 9:00 to 5:00, five days a week job, etcetera. Classes were are not held every day, all day long; it should give me more time. He was extremely supportive and said, "If this is what you really think you want to do, then I'll certainly help you if I can."

I can truthfully say that he lived up to every bit of that in terms of being helpful. I don't think that I could have gotten through the doctoral program if it had not been for the kind of support that he was giving. I think it was that we were both seeing it as a common decision, a joint decision. It wasn't my decision that he then went along with. It was a joint decision all along, and so much so, the second year, after I finished my first year, I got a phone call from someone who was applying for the doctoral program and she had small children and a husband. She asked whether they thought it was okay for her to come into the doctoral program and still be able to carry out her obligations with her family. They said, "Oh, Barbara Solomon was in the program last year. You might want to talk to her since she has small children, a family, and so on." So this woman called me, and when she asked me how did the year go, I said it was wonderful. It was one of the best years of my life. The opportunity to be with the faculty who are more peers than faculty/student relationships, who have truly taken an interest in what you want to learn and how you're going to learn it, and really form a partnership with you in order to make that happen, and to be able to do this and to go in the library and read a book from front to back, and all of this, I said it was absolutely a wonderful year. She said, "Well, you know, I think maybe that I will try it." A year later, I got a call from this person who practically cursed me out. She said that it had been the worst year of her life. She said, "I remember all the things you said last year. I got into the program, and it was the worst year of my life." Then she began to tell me

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why, and it had nothing to do with the school or the faculty. It had to do with the fact that she had a husband who, even though he had agreed that she could do this if she wanted to, made it very clear that he did not intent to make any sacrifices because of this, and so he wanted his dinner there when he got home from work. She still had total responsibilities for the kids, so just trying to do the logistics of trying to do all this had been absolutely overwhelming for her.

FELDMAN: Sounds horrible.

SOLOMON: It was. It absolutely was. The kind of tragedy of it was that she didn't get to experience what I had experienced because I had found the USC School of Social Work so different from Berkeley. They were in the same state, but they might have been on a different planet in many ways. First of all the curriculum. As I indicated, Berkeley had been very psychoanalytic, very Freudian, and I had gotten very little in the way of social policy, and as a matter of fact, we had one course on social welfare history, Walter Friedlander, "Social Welfare History," and there was a course on social work and the law. There was no specific course on social welfare policy at all. Although we certainly got some of it in the history course, because a lot of it was the history on legislation and so on, that influenced our social work practice, but certainly not in terms of policy analysis or formulation, or anything like that. So, USC was very different in that respect. Of course, a doctoral program is very different from a master's level program, anyway, just in terms of the numbers. The numbers are smaller, there is more contact with the faculty, but I even discovered early on in the doctoral program that the master's level courses were much smaller than my courses had been at Berkeley. We did not have a thesis at Berkeley. We had a comprehensive examination, which of course, caused all this high anxiety as you were getting ready to get your degree because you also had to pass the comprehensive

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examination.

I still recall one of my classmates--about the time that everybody was studying for the comprehensive exam--saying to me, "Barbara, everybody else seems to be absolutely spaced out because they're so anxious about the examination, and you seem to be taking it in stride. You don't seem to be concerned about it."

SOLOMON: I asked someone on the faculty, perhaps my faculty advisor, as we were discussing the comprehensive examinations, "How many people fail this exam each year?" My advisor said, "Well, we usually--there are at least two or three people who fail it each year." I said, "Well, I look around at my co-hort, and I decided that I might not be number one, but I'm not number ninety-seven in here, and so the chances are fairly good that I am going to get through this comprehensive examination." I did, but I often had thought it would have been much nicer to have been able to have a research project, or a thesis, or some product at the end that I could feel good about and felt might make some contribution to knowledge. I think about that now because that is where scholarship, I think, really gets appreciated and understood, and so on, and I think, already, I had a sense of wanting to know more and wanting in some systematic way, to help develop the kind of knowledge base that we were practicing for. I certainly didn't have much of an opportunity to do that in my Master's program. I certainly had an opportunity to experience what it meant for other students where I was a field instructor. They were doing their Master's thesis or Master's research project and so I was able to see that it had some very positive meaning for students.

The thing that I loved about the doctoral program was the opportunity to think, the opportunity to actually think about how or what you had done in practice and to consider

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alternative explanations and think about how you could determine which of those explanations were probably true, and I thought that the opportunity to do the research papers, to actually collaborate with the faculty around ideas, was just an exciting opportunity--even though, when I decided to get through the doctoral program and teach, again, my focus was on teaching practice because practice was everything. I mean, this was what it was all about. All of the questions now that I had had and did not have answers to, I was going to have an opportunity to find the answers to at least some of them because I was going to go into a doctoral program, and I was going to do research on practice. My focus was still on social work practice. I think it has always been. Even at this point in central administration in the University, I'm often saying to some of my colleagues who talk about a serious situation, "Well, of course you would do that, because you're a social worker." I think that there is, and usually "of course you would do that" in some situations where there is tension, where there is stress, and where, in contrast to my colleagues, my inclination is to take it on immediately, right now, and deal with it whereas I find, others are much more likely to try to avoid it or ignore it or walk away from it. I think social workers are certainly those people who know that problems don't go away if you ignore them, and have a deep interest in how problems get solved, particularly problems that deal with people and their relationship with others. I think that's why social work skills are often very useful in places where one would not even think of calling for a social worker. That certainly is something that I feel very strongly about our profession. The idea that teaching practice could help to constantly improve the profession, because you would be doing research and helping new practitioners going out to be much more effective than they might otherwise have been, is just a kind of real joy.

The doctoral program gave me an opportunity to think about things that hadn't worked well and certainly gave me an opportunity to think about the role of the social worker because that has always been of keen interest to me. What is it that the social worker does in dealing with problems that is going to help the client or the target system to deal more effectively with the problem? Most of that concern, I think, came from one of the deficiencies that I found from a psychoanalytical approach. That was that you were very often dealing with the unconscious, and there were things that you were doing with clients. The clients, themselves may not be aware of it, but because of your knowledge of intra-psychic activity and how the psyche works, you are going to be able to have an effect on them. I began to believe even before I left graduate school that no one ever does effective social work undercover, that unless you have an alliance with this client, you can forget it. I don't care how much Freudian psychology you understand, up front is the necessity of that client caring about what you think about what they do. If you don't care, then you cannot influence them in any way, whatsoever. I have felt so strongly about this. I think, again, that it certainly inspired a lot of the kind of research that I did. For example, it certainly seemed to me that in cross-cultural encounters, developing that kind of collaborative partnership was often more difficult. Therefore, we needed to understand, how does one do that across cultural boundaries? I had not gotten a great deal of that in my own training. I think, for example, "cultural" in my Master's program was cultural-at-large. I mean, it was Margaret Mead, it was not the inner city or what have you. I think, again, we had to think more, more closely about what we were experiencing in our contemporary lives with the people who may be across town from us, but who had cultural differences that often got in the way of our actually being able to develop the kind of partnership we needed in a social work relationship.

I found the opportunity to begin to explore that, actually, in the doctoral program. When I was completing my dissertation, with no idea that I would teach at USC, and I actually had made an appointment to talk to Eileen Blackey at UCLA, who was the dean then at UCLA--I had an appointment to talk to her--and Malcolm Stinson called me in and asked if I had thought about the possibility of teaching at USC. And I said, "Of course not, because I did not think that was a possibility." He said, "Well, some of the faculty have come to me and indicated that it might be possible for us to get an OK from the University-wide Committee on Appointment for Promotion and Tenure; we don't have any minority faculty here, and they feel very good about what you've done in the doctoral program, so if we inclined to do that, would you be interested?" "Well, of course I would be interested." (Laughter) I was absolutely delighted because this meant that I would be able to work with the people who had really become role models for me in terms of what a faculty member ought to be like and ought to be doing. I absolutely jumped at the chance. In fact, I canceled my appointment at UCLA. I really began to think about being on a faculty and being on the faculty at USC School of Social Work and how consistent what I would be able to do there was with what I had often thought about, even back in the Master's program, and that is the opportunity to bring into practice the kind of life experience that I've had where I had many questions about relationships between people, among people, between cultures, and so on, and to do it and get paid for it. It was just an exciting opportunity. Still, when it was, "what do you want to teach?" practice was at the heart of it. I had, in the last year of my doctoral program, as I indicated earlier, been a career teacher, which was an NIMH Fellowship. If you had completed all but dissertation, you could be taken on as a beginning instructor in the school, and you only taught one course each semester, and had a mentor. The course that I had taught had been

"Human Behavior in the Social Environment." I had thoroughly enjoyed that, too.

I had the choice of "Human Behavior and Social Environment" and "Research" actually, when I came onto the faculty. "Research" was something that I had found a love for and, particularly, the statistics of the doctoral program. In my career teacher year, I had been a kind of lab instructor in the statistics program for students who were taking the course outside of the School, but having difficulty with it, and the School said, well we'll provide this kind of laboratory opportunity for you. I had really found a love for that because the students so often reminded me of myself being very fearful of statistics and having come through that and having, I thought, learned some things about how to do it so people would not be afraid. Again, it was an opportunity to put into practice something I had come lately to learn. I began teaching Human Behavior and I began teaching Research in the School, and the kind of relationship among the faculty, to this day, I feel was unique. I don't know of another place, and I've been to a lot of universities and have visited a lot of schools of social work across the country--I think that the relationship among the faculty at the USC School of Social Work during that time was absolutely close; it was collaborative; it was mutually supportive; it was, for a new faculty person coming on, in no way intimidating; and I must say to you that I certainly attribute the kind of seamlessness from the doctoral program onto the faculty, especially in terms of writing for publication, as a major part of that.

I still am amused when I hear doctoral students or new faculty today talk about the fact that "I wish my doctoral education had made it possible for me to learn more about this whole business of getting published." I recall the seminar that you had for our doctoral group where we wrote and we had it critiqued, faculty critiqued, and we critiqued each others. When I came onto

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the faculty, I had two publications accepted for publication from that experience. These were out of my doctoral program. Now we try to do more throughout this University to get doctoral students to publish prior to getting their degree. I like to look back and see how far ahead we were back then.

FELDMAN: Maybe that's something we have to re-introduce.

SOLOMON: Absolutely, because it was indeed extremely useful. I did mention that my graduate fellowship was with the Gerontology Center, which was also another environment which was extremely helpful in socializing you to the demands of a faculty career. Certainly, the business of research and research grants and publication and all of that, permeated that whole Institute so that graduate students who came through there, I think, were already primed to do the kinds of things that were required to have a successful faculty career. Of course, again, I have to see doctoral students now, or young faculty who talk to me about the requirements for tenure and how to get it, and all of that. Invariably they will say, "Well, what did you go though?" I say, "What my case will make clear is that you cannot generalize. You can't generalize as to what it takes because we have to look at the times, look at what's being demanded at that point in time. The University at that time was a very de-centralized University. There was, I think, much greater weight given to what a school wanted than what a university-wide committee wanted. I recall that after my third year, again, Malcolm Stinson came in and said, "Well, it looks like you got a credible publication record. You're doing the research, you're getting published. I think we can go forward for tenure." I knew very little about the tenure process and about what the requirements were. I knew that I had published. I knew that I was in the process of working on a book. But it wasn't a big thing, it wasn't a huge thing. There wasn't the pressure, and I think, a

lot of it was the trust I had in the faculty, that if I'm not doing the right thing, they'll let me know. I don't find a lot of trust of junior faculty now on the university campuses that the senior faculty in their department will indeed be there for them, make sure that they understand what is happening, and so on. And that's another place that I think that our School may have been somewhat unique. I certainly trusted, and I had no reason at any time to regret trusting, that whatever the demands were, I would be told. At any point where I might not have been meeting some standards, I would be told. And I would be told in a very collegial way so that it would be very positive criticism. It would not be destructive or anything like that. I certainly felt comfortable in sharing my work with faculty for their criticism, and in taking their criticism, and in redoing things, and, most of the time, therefore, being successful in getting things published.

It was a very collegial kind of environment, and I think that was very instrumental in not only the success I had in the school as a faculty member, but served me in good stead when I moved outside of the school. Now, as I'm dealing with faculties all around the University, and very often, with faculty grievances or with faculty who are discontented or departments where there's a great deal of conflict, I feel that I have a good sense of what's wrong, a good sense of as a faculty, you could be more successful in getting your faculty through the University-wide tenure process if you cared about them from the day they'd gotten here, not just at the time they started to put a dossier together to come across to the University-wide committee. I said, for example, to new faculty coming onto the University, it's extremely important that you begin to understand the culture of your faculty, that you begin to understand what the standards are in terms of the expectation. How excellence is defined. I said to them, if you're going to write a paper and you're going to present at a conference in your discipline, and they ask you for recommendations

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for a respondent to your paper, don't choose your friends. Choose senior people at peer institutions so later, when you come up for tenure, you can then have someone "out there" who knows your work and who may be interested in it, and so on. These are the kinds of things that will help you to get tenure at the University at some later point.

I think these are all things I learned from the faculty at the School of Social Work, here at USC, when I was a junior faculty member, and when they were giving me advice and helping me to understand what it would take to get tenure. When I tell people I got tenure after my third year here, there's often a kind of intake of breath, "You must be kidding." (Laughter) Well, I feel that it was that kind of environment, an environment in which that kind of thing could happen. We could do more of that now, than we do.

When I look back at the way the curriculum, itself, has been responsive to the changing society, I know that it could have only done that with, first of all, faculty who were connected. And that's another thing I've often felt very strongly about the faculty. First of all, we brought on faculty who had experience in practice, so that even though we have had applicants for the faculty who had come out of doctoral programs with almost no practice experience themselves, we've often said that's not the kind of faculty we want here at USC. So I think that the faculty that we have brought on, have been deeply rooted in practice, and so they have not only been willing, but eager, to make the connection outside. The faculty had been very tuned in to the changes that are going on out in the committee, whether it's health care, whether it's in the mental health system, whether it's in protective services, whether it's in gerontology, or what have you, and because of that, I think the curriculum has probably reflected those changes much more effectively than it might have if we were depending only on looking in the literature to determine what is "the hot

issue" that we need to be struggling with.

I think that occurred around the issue of community, when community organization was brought to the center of the curriculum, along with working with individuals and working with groups. Working with communities became also something that every practitioner needed to know something about--not just people who were defined as community organizers. And that was a big leap for many of us who had been trained from other perspectives. I think it has helped us to not only to articulate, but even to promote concepts of political social work that I find absolutely important; but even more important, it's necessary the way people's problems emerge. We are not a small town or even a small neighborhood kind of community anymore, so that isolating problems into rigid little categories so that we can say, "Oh, I only do child welfare." "Oh, I'm in Gerontology." "Oh, I'm whatever." People and their problems tend to be very interlocking and interrelated with all kinds of things, and so in a single encounter, in a single social work case, you may have to deal with individuals, you may have to deal with a total family, you may have to deal with some group, you may have to deal with the community at large and the way it's responding to that family. I think our School has been really out there, educating people to do that.

I had an experience in New Orleans at the new School of Social Work at Southern in New Orleans, where one of our graduates, Lily Charles, is the Dean. When they were being considered, when CSWE (Council on Social Work Education) was considering their application for an MSW program, they sent a team to the school to look at their proposed curriculum and make recommendations. When I arrived, Lily and her faculty indicated to me, "Oh, yes, we really wanted you to come. We read all your work on empowerment and we're really committed to that

perspective." In one of the meetings, as they were beginning to describe what it was they wanted to do with their curriculum, one of the faculty said, "I'm sure Dr. Solomon will appreciate the fact that we're not into all of this clinical thing. We're about empowerment." I said, "Hold it. Wait. Please don't say that because I understand you're trying to say that clinical social work, from your perspective, deals only with the one-to-one kind of relationship, for the most part, and you might talk about family intervention, and so on, but it's focused on work with the individual family or small group. That's what you're defining as clinical social work. That's not the way clinical has to be defined. You can define clinical as any kind of intervention that you are doing to enable the individual, family, or small group to function more effectively. Your focus is on that individual family or small group, but that you do may require you to intervene in multiple systems, including whole social institutions. We have done that in one project that I had: we developed a whole way of dealing with schools so that when we were working with this family we knew what kind of intervention had to be done in the schools and with the people there in order to support what this family is doing outside. Therefore, if we're not educating people to deal with these macro systems like probation departments and welfare departments and hospitals and clinics, and so on, and we're only focusing on just the interpersonal relationships between you and this family problem, that's not effective clinical social work. It's not only not effective clinical social work, what you have done when you say, 'We're not into clinical. We're into something else,' you have denigrated clinical social work as something that is not as useful as it could be. Those of you who really believe in clinical social work ought to be the most willing to take this broader perspective because that's going to make clinical social work viable. Without that, it becomes some kind of artifact of our past."

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It took considerable time for me to help them understand that this was something that had come about because we are a School where every Master student not only--and that is whether they intend at some point to be a psychiatric social worker or community organizer--has had to have work with family; if you're a community organizer, you're going to have a first-year field placement where you'll be working with families; and you know what it is to be a practitioner there at the interface of that family and whatever they are having trouble with outside. You may later have a community organizer want to do something about that dysfunctional community or the other resources that are not there, to mobilize them, or what have you. N matter that if you are a clinical social worker and you want to work in some little hospital with schizophrenic patients, you know something about social policy, you know something about administration, you know something about these things that have to facilitate you and your work with that schizophrenic patient. That is something a good school has to absolutely have at the heart of its curriculum development through the years that now, I think, positions our School to be one of the foremost schools of social work in the country.

FELDMAN: That was the theory on which Arlien Johnson operated, and Bogardus before her, so that it was really built into the nurturing of the School as it matured.

SOLOMON: It's the kind of thing that helps me, for example, with a potential student or someone who says, "I think I would like to go to get an MSW from USC." And I say, "Well, what do you want to do with an MSW? What do you see yourself doing? Why do you want to be a social worker?" And for those who tell me, "Well, I'm really interested in private practice. I want to be a psycho-therapist." What I say to them is, "Well, from the perspective of the School of Social Work at USC, if you come out of an MSW program and the only thing you know how

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to do is psycho-therapy, you are really an untrained social worker. A trained social worker has multiple skills of which that may be one, but in many cases, is not the most important in terms of helping resolve some problems. Therefore, we cannot promise to give you only that. Unless you are willing to become a trained social worker, then you should not come to our School." I believe that, and I think it also has made it clear to a number of our students who get out of our School and come back and tell me the difference they perceive in the way they go about problem-solving and some of their peers from other schools, is that USC-educated social workers, for the most part, really do perceive themselves as resource mobilizers. The fact that someone needs a resource that is not there, does not mean that I write in a chart somewhere, this person could use this, but it's not available, and so therefore, he does not have access to it. They have to write in there what they have done to try to get it. Very often, formal resources indeed may not be there, but informal resources can often be accessed, and that's the social worker's job. I think that that is something that our School has been very forthright about in its curriculum.

I think as we have now looked out and seen many different kinds of professions emerging, many of them purporting to do what social workers do, there's been some concern that perhaps the profession isn't really a profession, and perhaps, we could do better at getting a doctorate in marriage and family counseling, or educational psychology, or what have you, but I have looked at--certainly from the standpoint of Central Administration, and certainly when I was Graduate Dean--all of these kinds of graduate programs. Most of them do some of the kinds of things that social workers do, but certainly not all of the things that social workers do, and certainly not all of it which has been integrated in a way that makes it supportive of the way people really are. People need education, people need health care, people need good positive interpersonal

relationships. They need all of those things. So when they encounter problems in a life situation, they don't need to partialize this out: I have to go over here to get help with my educational issues, I don't need to go over here to deal with the problems I'm having in getting access to health care; I don't have to go over here and talk to someone about the employment issues, and I don't have to go over here--social work is truly an integrated profession. It's one which says that the person has to integrate all that, and the person who functions effectively is one who can integrate all of that as well. Therefore, from our perspective, to be able to help clients address all of those things simultaneously, is frequently going to be much more productive than having it partialized out and then going to five different professionals to try to help with that.

FELDMAN: What you describe is really a distinctive characteristic of social work in contrast to other helping professions. It's really a unique characteristic.

SOLOMON: Yes, it is. And again I point out that I've said to a number of persons exploring whether they really want to come into social work or not, that the beautiful thing about social work is that it's in every social work institution that anywhere the individual is, where some dysfunctional relationship between themselves and that social institution, that's where social workers are, at that interface. It's not because that person is alone and sitting in their room and contemplating, "Who am I?" But it is how I relate to somebody else in some kind of situation or setting, so therefore, we're in the courts, we're in the hospitals, we're in schools, we're all over the place. Given that, it is a marvelous profession if one feels that over the course of a lifetime, they would want to do different things rather than just one thing. Again, just because I decide in the School of Social Work to do a concentration on family and children, it does not mean that I am forever somehow only there. I've pointed out to people that in contrast to the old

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specializations which had much more of a medical model, that you would somehow gain an in-depth knowledge about some particular area. I've seen our concentration as much more of an educational strategy that says, okay, in our first year we give you courses on practice, we give you courses on human behavior, we give you courses in social policy, and we give you a field practicum. At that point, we are focusing on the particular framework for understanding those particular areas of social work. But then, in a concentration, we give you an opportunity to see how it all works together. Therefore, you choose a concentration because your practice class, your behavior class, your policy class, your field work will all be in that concentration. What you're really learning is how in any setting, these things get organized in a way that the social worker uses them to be effective in the job that he or she has to do. But, once you understand how they relate to each other, then you can go out and do that in any kind of setting. . I had a cousin who came through the School ten or fifteen years ago.

FELDMAN: Our School?

SOLOMON: Yes, through the School of Social Work, here, and she'd come in--she'd gotten her undergraduate degree at UC Riverside--she came to me and said she thought she wanted to go into social work because she wanted to work with older people. She knew that we had a School of Gerontology, here--actually, the Gerontology Center. It was not a school at that time. She knew that we had a joint degree program with Gerontology, and that's why she was applying to the school. She was admitted, and she did a joint degree, a dual degree in social work and gerontology. I guess it was about 14 or 15 years ago.

I was visiting her in the Seattle area bout four years ago, and she was getting ready to go to Korea to pick up some children for her agency. She's the director of a children's agency in

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Tacoma. I said to her, "Cynthia, whatever happened to gerontology? You decided to come into the School of Social Work because you had the possibility of getting the dual degree in gerontology, and I know that your first job was in that area, so, how is it that you are now the director of a children's agency?" She said, "Well, you know, I actually worked in gerontology. I worked for AAA (Area Administration on Aging) in Los Angeles for about two or three years and then I got married. When I got married I came here because my husband was transferred to the Tacoma area. At the time, the best opportunity I had was in a family agency, a family service agency. So I took the job in the family service agency. Then I worked up to where I was the director of the family service agency. After several years of administrative experience in that agency, this job came up as director of this children's agency, and it seemed like an interesting job because of what they were doing and what they were trying to do. I moved over and became administrator of this agency, and it's been a wonderful experience. I have not found it difficult to make the transition."

FELDMAN: She worked from the life span, backwards.

SOLOMON: That's right, she did (Laughter) I think that people who have been educated in our School of Social Work do not find that terribly difficult because we have not trained people to be effective only in very narrow little ruts. We have indeed, I think, helped them to understand how you take these skills into different settings. And as I indicated, here in the University, I certainly have found that many of the skills that I'm being asked to use now are social work skills. Just to give you an example; we had a dean who had an extremely difficult time with his faculty. There were several kinds of difficult situations where I had to deal with this dean and at least one faculty member who was getting ready to file a grievance of some kind or another. In the process, the

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dean really had--he isn't dean anymore--developed some very difficult relationships with other people, so a number of his faculty and a number of other people had kind of decided that they weren't even talking to him. But I continued to talk to him to try to see if he could do things in a way that would not cause all of the tension and all of that kind of thing, and we kept a good relationship. Some of the people that he antagonized and that he didn't talk to, I also had very positive relationships with. I can recall one point where we were trying to find somebody to do a job, and one of the vice provosts came to me and said, "I don't understand this. There are two factions here, and they aren't talking to each other. They can't stand each other, and each of the factions has nominated you to do this job. I don't understand that." I said, "That's what social workers do. Social workers always talk to both sides. If we're doing marital counseling, we don't say, 'We can only talk to the wife. We can't talk to the husband,' even though they're about to tear each other apart. The whole notion is that we need to be able to establish relationships with people who can't stand each other. Constantly, we're in situations where we're dealing with dysfunctional relationships where one side absolutely can't stand the other, or is hostile towards the other. If we couldn't talk to both sides, we couldn't do our job. We could not be effective. So, what you're talking about is not me. We're talking about, I'm talking about the training that we have had to be able to deal with these kinds of situations."

That's something that I feel that I'm constantly having to do because what I want people to understand is that you're not talking about Barbara Solomon's personality that makes her able to do this. You're talking about Barbara Solomon's education and training which makes her able to do this. That's a very different kind of notion. And I want them to have the respect for the profession and what the profession actually trains people to do. I think that there are clearly these

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kinds of skills that we have been helped to develop, that can be utilized in a lot of different areas.

Well, let me just talk a little bit more at this point about some of the things that have happened in the way of cross-cultural social work and working with different ethnic groups, and so on, because that came to mind as I was talking about what stands me in good stead over here in this job (University Vice Provost for Minority and Faculty Affairs). It's interesting that at one of our provost staff meetings, the Provost said to us, "Well, we're going to have to deal with something the President is very concerned about, now, and that's this whole area of Affirmative Action. He's concerned that some legislation will come down and they will find that something that we're doing, for example, in terms of giving racial preferences will get us into trouble and difficulty, and so on. First of all, he wants to understand what it is we are doing, and if it looks as if we're giving preferences based on race to do something so that we won't get somehow clobbered because of what we're doing. The Dean of Admissions, Joe Allen, said, "Well, when we admit people to the University, there are factors that can bump people up from one level to another because we have people on first, on the basis of SAT scores and grade point averages. We have about four or five levels where people, depending on the higher SAT score, may have a lower grade point average than can be to acceptable, or some other combination of SAT and grade point level. Anyway, we've got about five levels. There are certain things that can bump you up from one level to the next level. Under-represented minority status is one of them. One is if you are an alum's child, or if you are the child of somebody who's made a big donation to the University, or if you are in a geographical area where we would like to have more, because we want to be a national University rather than a local one." He was naming all these things that can bump you up. Someone on the staff said, "Well, but I don't think that will save us if they have

somehow passed some legislation saying that racial ethnicity can never be used in making decisions about admissions. Then the fact that we bumped somebody up from three to two because they were Black or Hispanic, is likely to be perceived as being illegal and that we shouldn't do it." And I said, "You know, it's interesting. We struggled with this in social work years ago, years ago. And we resolved it, and we have never given somebody a priority on the basis of race or ethnicity. That has not been there." I said, "I remember very vividly when we were trying to do affirmative action; when we were trying to say that we need to get more students who come from under-represented minority groups. And I remember the discussion as to whether we should give some kind of bonus points or priority points to persons who were Black or Latino. And the decision was no. We should not do that. What we did decide to do was to give priority to those persons who had had experience in working with low-income, disadvantaged groups, to give persons who had had--first of all, to come into our Master's program, we gave some priority to persons who had some kind of prior social work experience , whether it was in a volunteer capacity or paid. We gave extra points if they had had some experience in working with under-represented minority groups. Guess what? Eighty percent of those happened to be African-American or Latino students. But twenty percent of them were not. They were white students. Therefore, we did not discriminate against anybody in making that decision. It was on the basis of something that made sense, something that made sense in terms of what we were trying to be as a school. So, you have to get underneath the question of "we need more under-represented minority groups." The question is, "Why do you need them?" And then you get to the "why," and then you say, "Well that's what we ought to really support." If over there in Admissions, they're saying, "We need a more diverse kind of population than we have--

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and we need to get people who are at different income levels, different geographic representation." Therefore, if we are looking at carving up Southern California and saying, "If now we see that the majority of Southern California students come from San Marino and Newport Beach and Atherton, then we need to say, okay, for Southern California residents, we will give some priority to those who come from South County, San Diego County, or North, wherever they're under-represented, minority students. That way, if someone is white who comes from there, they get the same amount of priority because they haven't been coming in either. That's the kind of thing where social workers have been so far ahead of the game that we have developed much more rational ways of dealing with issues of under-representation that now, the whole University needs to benefit from. Therefore, much of what I can contribute at this level comes from the kind of school I've been in and the kind of experience that I've had there. I would hold that as we now are looking at a very lean administration in Washington that wants to punish children for what they perceive as the sins of the parents, that wants to ignore the fact that on the one hand, crime, dealing with crime and crime prevention is one of our highest priorities, but over here we don't realize that we are creating a whole generation of new criminals when we let children grow up uncared for, unprepared, unprotected, and so on. They're going to be the ones who are out there; who are mugging and killing all of us. When we have that kind of lack of critical thinking, it seems to me that to have a school of social work in a major research university, where critical thinking is supposed to be the order of the day; that's what we do best. That we can have some influence on this dialog that's going on right now, is exactly what our School of Social Work is in a position to do. That's why I worked with the Chronicle staff person, to get that--did you see the op-ed piece that I did in the San Francisco Chronicle a couple of weeks ago

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on "Social Work is Not a Do-nothing Profession."

FELDMAN: No, I didn't see that.

SOLOMON: Well, I will have to show that to you. Essentially, what I was trying to say in there is that social work is the profession that ought to be getting the most attention now, rather than the least. This was in response to a lot of criticism of the crime bill. The criticism was that there are more social workers that policemen. That automatically meant that's a bad thing. I was really pointing out that social workers--you ought to be glad, in essence, if you're getting more social workers, because they're the ones that are trying to deal with those problems. You can't have it both ways. You can't not want to have the problems, but then you don't want to have the social workers who are there to deal with that.

FELDMAN: Will you supply me with a copy?

SOLOMON: Before you go, I have a copy here on my desk. I'll make sure.

April 26, 1995

SOLOMON: When I think of my own research and publications, I almost immediately think of three or four years ago when a South African student in the School of Social Work, a young, African woman who was teaching in the School of Social Work in South Africa, was here to get her Master's in the United States. She made an appointment to come in and see me. She said that she had wanted to meet me because she had used my book in her classes in South Africa. The book was "Black Empowerment in Social Work Communities." She indicated that it had been a real challenge because the book had been banned by the South African Government. I told her that I thought that was probably one of the nicest compliments that I'd ever received, or it would have been if I'd felt that they had really read the book when they banned it. I assumed that

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the title alone had been enough to get it banned in South Africa, since the last thing that they were wanting to facilitate was Black empowerment in the land of Apartheid. It was very, very rewarding to me that something I had written, had that kind of impact--particularly, since the work on it had actually begun right after I arrived at the School of Social Work. In the early 70s, I was asked to teach a course on social work practice in the Black community. I had been somewhat resistant to do this because I assumed that the reason I was being asked to teach it was because I was Black. Yet I certainly had nothing in my formal social work education to help me develop a conceptual framework about how one generates principles of intervention. What are the foundation concepts we need to be able to do that? I was reluctant to do it, but I was pressed because, at the time, students were demanding "more relevant" content in the curriculum, more content about working in inner cities.

FELDMAN: Was this in the late 60s?

SOLOMON: Yes. I assumed then that I would teach it. However, rather than teach it in a classroom on campus--and as if I were the expert--I would take the class out into the actual community. I would facilitate discussion between the students and practitioners who were delivering services in the community, to determine if, in fact, the kinds of theoretical formulation that we were using to underpin all of our social work intervention had relevance in that community. We took the class to a multi-purpose community center in South Central Los Angeles that was run by the Methodist Church. We had staff who came to class with us each week, and we also had clients. We used the life-stage characterized as the organizing principles for the course, and as we were dealing with the characteristic problems we encountered at a particular life-stage, the practitioners would invite clients who were experiencing these problems,

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to come to class. The students and I would present what we had been taught about how to deal with those kinds of problems, really trying to get some feedback from the practitioners and the clients as to whether this really made sense.

We learned an awful lot during that class. For example, I remember very vividly a class when we were dealing with the problems of the elderly. Students had been scheduled to make presentations, having actually collected particular problems that they wanted to present to the group. A student had made a very fine presentation of some of the problems facing the elderly, and had identified the problem of nutrition, particularly in low-income neighborhoods actually reducing the quality of life for older people, and had recommended that perhaps the Center could think of a meals program at the Center, to assist elderly in actually achieving nutritional goals. We had several seniors who came to that class, and when she finished, one of them raised her hand and said, "Well, I'll come. I have to ride two buses to get to the Senior Center, and by the time I get on one bus and get off, get on another bus and come to the Senior Center and eat lunch at the center and then get back on the bus and get off again and get back on another bus and get home, I'm hungry again. I'm not sure that that's such a good idea." The student was not to be dismayed and said, "You're right. What we really ought to have, what the agency should have, is a meals-on-wheels program where we could actually bring the meals to your home." Her response was, "You bring me some groceries and I'll cook my own meal." It was a kind of funny insight of how service delivery systems can help to foster dependency rather than help individuals to reach whatever their own potential is for being independent and taking control of their own lives. This was one aspect of a lot of incidents of powerlessness that we observed in the clients that came to that agency to deal with a whole variety of problems. Very often, their inability to

deal with the problems had very little to do with their own individual personality or skill in getting around in their environment. It had a lot to do, sometime, with obstacles put in their way based not on some kind of individual attribute or characteristic, but merely because they were Black. We had families who had limited options in terms of their housing, young families who wanted to move out of the neighborhood because of all of the problems in the neighborhood--particularly the schools--but couldn't get out because housing was not available to them outside of the community, housing that they could afford. There were adults who had tried to obtain jobs but didn't get the jobs--they felt that the reason they had not gotten the job was because they were Black. There were persons who had jobs, but in parts of the city that were very distant from their homes and that made it very difficult for them to get to health clinics with their children, to keep appointments, and they would lose their jobs if they took time off to do this.

It was through that class that I began to think about how I had been taught about powerlessness in my own social work education. The kinds of theoretical frameworks for practice that we were using were very explicit in terms of the kind of powerlessness that comes from idiosyncratic family relationships and dysfunctional interpersonal relationships that render people unable to really take control of their own lives. I learned about how to design interventions aimed at helping them to understand these relationships, and how they were dysfunctional, and how they could improve those relationships. I also learned a lot about dysfunctional organization, about how an agency worked effectively or ineffectively to help the clients who came there. What we didn't have at the time in our framework of practice, was real understanding of how to deal with the powerlessness that people were experiencing that came from social institutions, that came from their inability to deal with and handle and function in

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terms of major social institutions: the schools, the courts, the probations department, the welfare department, the hospital system. Most of the families that we talked to had experienced some kind of dysfunctional relationship with those institutions and had little understanding of how to negotiate those systems in order to get the kinds of things they needed for themselves or their family. It seemed to me, then, that if we were going in to try to help families deal with their powerlessness--and our assessment of why they were powerless dealt only with their family relationship but not with their relationships to those social institutions--that we were going to be ineffective. We had a great deal of confirmation from our clients that we weren't as effective as they would like us to be; and from the practitioners, that they were not as effective as they would like to be. There is this powerlessness that came from being a member of a stigmatized group that we needed to address more explicitly. Given this, I thought that this was an area that I needed to spend a great deal of time on, doing more research, trying to understand exactly what it meant, how one could incorporate into the assessment model of social work practice a simultaneous concern for the relationship between people and these institutions as well as their own family relationships.

For the next two or three years, I spent a great deal of time soliciting case materials from the agencies that I was the liaison for. In the olden days, we were faculty liaison to the agencies where our students were placed. We now have field liaison persons who do that, totally, but at that time, each faculty member had a group of agencies. They had to oversee the students that were placed there. I used these agencies as a source of case materials of information that I could use to try to get an understanding of the kinds of problems that were coming from these inner-city agencies, the kind of social work intervention that was being carried out, and what seems to be

missing in the way of strategies that address the powerlessness that came from other than the idiosyncratic relationships.

SOLOMON: Yes. I have been talking about what I had learned from the project in the churches, the kind of impact that the research had had, and the kinds of things that we had learned. We had learned about how to intervene with organizations on behalf of families, individual families, and priming was one of the interventions. In a family where we felt that there might a negative action taken by the school if one of the kids in the family actually began to act out, the worker and the parent went to the school, explained to the counselor, to the home room teacher, that the family was having some difficulties. The child might respond, and if that child did not respond, there was a call to the mother or the worker to come immediately to the school to pick up the kid. That way it was a kind of "time out." They were proposing a possible action if indeed the kid acted out. And it so happened that in about three weeks, one did; and the parent was called by the home room teacher. The parent went to the school and picked up the kid. The next day, the kid was back in school. The school had been primed to behave in a different way than it would have ordinarily. This was in the best interest of the family. This kind of intervention, as an integral part of clinical social work, is something that I've had to press on many practitioners who want to see intervention in organizations as macro practice and not clinical social work. In fact, as I've said before, when I went to a new school of social work, that was, as a visitor from the Council on Social Work Education, I was told that they weren't interested in that "clinical social work" stuff. They were all about empowerment. I had to make it clear to them that that was clinical social work, and that, as a matter of fact, to somehow define clinical social work so narrowly that it only includes psycho-therapy or one-to-one kinds of

intervention was, I thought, a distortion of what clinical social work really is.

I was defining, in this project, clinical social work as any social work that was focusing on helping bring about change for individuals, families, or small groups. The intervention in the school was really aimed at bringing about better resolutions for the problems of that family. We would hope that the school learns something in the process and that that might eventually bring about change in the organizations. But that was not the immediate goal. The focus was still on the family, and therefore, from our perspective, very much clinical social work. That study helped us to begin to identify those kinds of interventions, and, as I said, to make them part of the practice model, which could then be extricated, disseminated, taught. That is certainly what I've done. Many social workers who've been influenced by that research, have also done the same.

Even now, I have a manuscript on my C drive on my computer, which holds a lot. Still, I get a phone call every now and then from the editor at Columbia Press because I have promised her that at some point, I was going to get back to it. I really do want to put it together.

At this point, I'm really in conflict because there are two things that I want to do. They are both, I think, extremely important to me. I hardly have time to do one. Therefore, the notion that I'm going to able to do two seems to be absolutely unthinkable. But I keep thinking the unthinkable. One is to finish that manuscript which really does explicate more definitively what it means, what macro-level intervention for clinical social workers, is all about. When I first came over to Central Administration, I wrested from the Provost an agreement that I would still be able to teach one course a year in the School of Social Work. The first three years that I was over here, I actually did that. I taught a four-semester course on macro-level practice for clinical social workers, in which we had both COPA (Community Organization, Planning, and Administration)

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students and direct practice students. It was, in my perspective, extremely useful. The students seemed to get a great deal out of it, particularly, as they were about to walk out of the door of the school because it was essentially dealing with this whole issue of how one practices when the major dysfunction is a relationship between persons and organizations, not interpersonal between persons or in the organization, itself. I found that it was that perspective that was almost always required when I was in a staff development program of some kind with staff who invariably would say to me, "You're talking about empowering clients. What about empowering ourselves? We're the ones who feel powerless because we know what needs to be done, and very often, it's just not possible to get it there because of bureaucracy, because of government constraints, and all of these things. So, how do you empower social workers?" Most often, it was again that their thinking had almost always reflected that unfortunate polarization in the profession of the direct practice, and the indirect practitioners as if they were somehow going on parallel tracks, and they didn't ever interface. What my research has amply demonstrated is that, particularly for those clients who have most difficulties in their lives with these relationships with organizations because of their powerlessness and need to interact with those organizations, we must be better trained in how we deal with dysfunctional relationships between them. Often it includes our view of what our role is. Let me give you an example. I've said to students sometimes when they're doing an assessment of the agency as a helping organization, and they look at the agency policies to try to determine how facilitative these policies are in helping them achieve some goal with the families. I get back this whole thing, "Well, you know, we really have to do something in this agency about taking a good look at these policies because some of them are so ambiguous that it's very difficult to interpret them. We need to try to get greater clarity in what these policies are." I invariably

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ask, "Are you sure you want to do that? Are you sure you want to force that policy into a definiteness that makes it impossible for you to have any flexibility to use that policy to the best advantage? It may very well be that you want it to be somewhat confusing or ambiguous, at least, because you want to be able to say, "This is what the client needed, and that's how I interpreted it." Isn't that a perfectly reasonable interpretation to make, that having to pin you down may not be in the best interest of the client? What you really want is the flexibility to move sometimes in different directions in order to be able to assist the client. These are the kinds of things that my research has contributed to the conceptualization of practice, and I'm always making the point that no matter what we do when we try to figure out how we can be more effective in working with oppressed groups and working with under-represented minorities, what we generally come out with is something that says this is good for everybody. This is the way that we can deal with people in general, and it just so happens that we have seen something where minority populations may have been impacted to a much greater extent. But that doesn't mean that others aren't similarly impacted. Therefore, it enhances our ability to work with people in general. We don't just see it as something specific for that minority group.

I have moved, now, to think more about what it means to operate in a multi-ethnic environment. Back in the '70s, we were casting most of our problems in terms of black and white. That clearly is no longer possible. It is of enormous concern, or should be, to social work being practiced in a complex, heterogenous community like Los Angeles. There the client population on any given day may be Hispanic, Vietnamese, Cambodian, African-American, or what have you. Obviously, we cannot be expert on every culture. But I do think, again, that we can come up with guiding principles about how one negotiates in a multi-cultural environment,

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particularly, in dealing with conflicts and tensions that emerge in those environments because of difficulties in cross-cultural communications.

The second area that I've also been doing some preliminary kind of gathering of data on, has to do with multi-ethnic practice and how one deals with that. Much of it, actually, came out of a lot of what I have experienced in Central Administration as we tried to create a more diverse academic community here. We were developing a program in American Studies and Ethnicity, and I actually chaired the steering community that was developing the proposal for a program in American Studies and Ethnicity two years ago. That program started this year. It has four programs: African-American Studies, Chicano-Latino Studies, Asian-American Studies and just straight American Studies. The core courses, the introductory courses in the program, are common. All of the program majors must take the same introductory courses.

FELDMAN: Together?

SOLOMON: Oh, yes. Yes. It's together. Not only that, once they are beyond the introductory courses and into their own ethnic-specific courses, they have to take courses in the other. Therefore, if you're majoring in African-American Studies, you have to have electives in Chicano-Latino and Asian-American Studies. It's that way for all of the majors. They come out with a fundamental frame of reference that is shared. They come out having some knowledge of the others, as well as an in-depth knowledge of their own major. That is the model for the society, that there should be for a cohesive society, a fundamental frame of reference that identifies the common values that we all have to hold if this society is going to hang together. At the same time that we have a fundamental understanding of our own group, we should also understand some things about others and appreciate and respect others.

FELDMAN: I want to ask you something. How do you fit into this educational scheme such as

other ethnic groups, culture and religion, and so forth?

SOLOMON: Because the only way that we are going to survive as a society, as heterogenous as

we are, is to find those things that we say regardless of what our specific ethnicity is, we, as

Americans, have a commitment to this. Then we can express things differently, and I'll give you

just one, one, one value orientation that is American regardless of what our ethnicity may be.

That is a fundamental value on the right of the individual to achieve whatever his potential is,

period. You may be Muslim and come from a society where women may not have had that

opportunity, but if you are an American Muslim, you're going to have to accept that as a basic

social value. Now, that obviously says that there is something different about being Arab or being

Arab-American, about being a Mexican and being a Mexican-American, about being Italian and

being Italian-American, that there are some things that you can respect and celebrate and

appreciate in terms of your heritage, and all of that. But there are some other things, that because

you are an American in this society, we place a distinct value on it if it says that within any

instance that that comes into conflict with what has been, in the past, as part of that other

heritage, that this must prevail. We have to make that very clear. So, one of the positive

experiences I had in chairing that steering committee was the kind of discussions that I had with

the faculties who would be teaching Asian-American Studies and Chicano-Latino Studies and

African-American Studies, to make sure that we were prepared to talk about a cohesive,

fundamental frame of reference, that we would agree to share and then to free up a whole

segment of the curriculum to deal with the ethnic-specific, but to make sure that our students had

some sense of how that was being expressed in the other groups. That is critical not just to

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society, but certainly to social work practice since practicing where people come into conflict in a multi-ethnic society one is going to obviously run into those that are based because of difficulties in cross-cultural communication. I've had some ideas on one group of materials. I called it "Beyond Empowerment." Another thing I talked about was that I wanted to get away from empowerment, and I thought that was the other kind of conceptualization. What really are you talking about now when you talk about how one deals with these inter-ethnic conflicts, these conflicts that have given us Bosnia and Rwanda and Northern Ireland and Palestinian/Israeli conflicts, and all of them are ethnic in their tension and how they have come about. And what do you think when you are proposing that you look at all of the materials that you gathered and the kinds of strategies that you're talking about in dealing with this, you move beyond empowerment to what? The word that I've come with now is "equipoise." Equipoise is balance. When I look at all of the things that I'm talking about, as I start talking about these things, it is, in fact, the necessity to achieve balance.

No matter what it is that you value, it can be taken to an extreme, and it becomes not a positive. It becomes a negative. It seems that we have to get a mind-set at some point that we constantly have to ask, even when we are hearing people that we are prepared to disagree violently with, asking, "What about their point of view?" has some validity. No matter how wild or crazy we think it is, most of the wild, crazy things started from something that had some validity, but then it ran wild. It got carried away. So what we have to do is to develop a kind of critical thinking process that helps us to get back to the essential issue. Then when we go to communicate with those people that we're prepared to disagree violently with, we don't start with our disagreement. We start with what we can agree with. We start the "yes, but," I call it. The

"yes, but" syndrome. Yes, you have a right not to want this to happen. But is what you are proposing the way to deal with it? So we start with a "yes." I am saying that probably in all but the most totally irrational and extreme kinds of position, we can find a "yes." We can find a way to start the communication. If we don't find that, then it's not going to matter. If there's somebody out there who is screaming now about affirmative action, and we've got to do away with it, and it's terrible, and it's reverse discrimination, and all of this, I can't go out there and say, "You're wrong. You're wrong. Affirmative action has been the best thing since sliced bread to people who needed it. There's not a basis for us to come together." They're going to do everything they can to convince people of their point of view, and I'm going to do everything I can to convince people of my point of view. There is never an attempt to say, "Where's our point of agreement? Where is it that we can say we disagree on this, but here is where we can agree?" My sense is that whenever we start the communication with the "yes," that then we have the best possible chance of moving to some resolution of the conflict rather than having it escalate until we get to violence. So that's essentially the perspective. And as I said, I've got these two groups of materials that I've been working with.

FELDMAN: You need equipoise between them.

SOLOMON: That's right. That's it exactly. It's almost unthinkable that I could do both of these things simultaneously. But I have this almost irrepressible urge to work on both. So, who knows.

FELDMAN: Maybe you'll do it.

SOLOMON: Maybe I'll do it. Right. Okay. Time is up.

FELDMAN: Okay, we're ready to go. We'll just pick up where we left off.

SOLOMON: Yes, I had been talking about my ongoing research interests that continue in social work, despite the fact that for the past, now, almost eight years, I have been in Central Administration. I will be team-teaching a course next spring--a fourth-year course--with Paul Carlo in the Family and Children's concentration, where we will be looking at specifically the kinds of interventions that are needed when one is working in public agencies and having to deal with bureaucracies, so that the practice of social work can be effective even in host settings where often the values are not the same as that of the professional values of social work. For example, many public agencies these days have strong business orientation, public administration orientation, and I think that despite the fact that these are laudable professional orientations, they often miss something very necessary when delivering social welfare services. Our schools are insistent that those who are trained as Master's level social workers, even when they are going into community organization planning and administration, know something about the direct service to individuals, families, and groups. I think that is really essential because those who come into those agencies as social work administrators have a sensitivity to the kinds of issues that the families bring, that clients have. Administrators coming out of other disciplinary orientations often do not have this sensitivity.

This leads me to begin to talk a little bit about how our curriculum has changed over the years that I've been on the faculty, certainly as it has changed in relation to my own teaching and research. I, of course, was trained, as I've said before, as a caseworker. When the School made the shift to integrated practice methods, it was somewhat of a wrenching experience for many of

us who had been trained as caseworkers, although I was perhaps advantaged in that the School was beginning to move in that direction when I was in the Doctoral program. As a matter of fact, when I had indicated that I hoped to teach practice, I was advised that I should have some group work experience because all of my experience had been as a caseworker. If I were going to teach practice in the School of Social Work, there was a good chance that I was going to need to know something about social group work as well as casework. In the Doctoral program, I actually had a field experience as a therapist at what was then called the Southern California Psychiatric Institute. It later became Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center.

FELDMAN: That was our first psychiatric clinic in Los Angeles.

SOLOMON: I wasn't aware of that.

FELDMAN: It started at the old Cedars of Lebanon hospital.

SOLOMON: Well, I had a year of field placement there. My task during that year was to develop a social work group treatment program in an agency that had only had group therapy as a model from the psychiatric perspective. The supervisors were psychiatrists or those who had come out of a psychiatric frame of reference. The group therapy that was offered there had never been defined as social group work. I, as a Doctoral student, was given the charge of developing social group work to the extent that I could articulate the difference between the approach that I would take as a social work group practitioner versus a psychiatrically defined group therapist. That is how I spent my year. I was able not only to publish the model, but I was able to use it when I came on the faculty as we began developing the integrated practice course which included both casework and group work. I was much less sanguine about the incorporation of community organization into this mix. I wasn't quite sure that that was going to be at all possible. But I

found the faculty extremely open to trying out ideas about how it could be done. I think that actually characterized our faculty over time, this willingness to move beyond what they had been taught or even where they were at a given time, to consider innovations and things that seemed to be in the best interest of the profession because of changing practice means. Certainly, the integrated practice methods were a major contribution of our faculty to a movement that swept across the country in schools of social work.

I also feel that we were out front when it came to integrating ethnic content into our curriculum. I certainly remember those days in the late '60s and early '70s when we had the faculty retreats where we went to discuss, as a faculty, how we were going to be more culturally sensitive, how we were going to integrate more content on under-represented minority groups into our curriculum. I even recognized, much later, our ability to even move beyond that when it became clear that those early efforts put a great deal of emphasis on consciousness-raising as the place we needed to be in social work to sensitize our practitioners to our cultural differences. Consciousness raising became a major objective in many of our practice classes as well as in the courses on human behavior in the social environment. Several years later it was clear that we had to go beyond that, that it wasn't just enough to say, "Well, we all have racist attitudes or beliefs." We had to move beyond that to what does it mean about the kinds of problems we encounter and what do we do about dysfunctional feelings and attitudes. That was always there, but at a much lower kind of intensity.

FELDMAN: Not as well articulated.

SOLOMON: Not as well articulated. The much bigger piece seemed to be how can we raise the consciousness of insensitive people. Our ability to move beyond that was very important because

not just in social work, but in many of the helping professions we tended to get mired down at that level, and not move beyond it. I think it is absolutely critical that if we are going to be effective in working with a cross-cultural boundary, that it becomes necessary that we think through very carefully the implications of specific attitudes, beliefs, and how we incorporate that into our intervention strategies which hopefully can lead to positive change. The faculty of our School of Social Work at the University of Southern California has been extremely open to the changing society and its needs and actually developing our curriculum to be responsive to that. I don't think that we could be criticized, at least with there being much validity to it, for staying in one place, getting into a kind of rut and not moving forward. We have been a very forward-moving faculty.

I had two experiences outside of the country: one in England, and one in Kenya. I was part of a group that developed a workshop for English social workers, interestingly enough, focusing on social work in the workplace. This was sponsored by Smith College School <u>for</u> Social Work (I always have to emphasize that because they emphasize that it is the School <u>for</u> Social Work) that had been asked to organize a group of American social workers who had some understanding of social work in the workplace to provide a kind of educational opportunity for English social workers who were interested in what for them was a very new, but also apparently exciting direction for the profession to take. This was not long after we had started in our School a series of symposia, task forces, and so on, to think about social work in the work place, and you're very familiar with all of that activity which did involve a number of faculty in that effort. I had also taught in Smith's College's summer program for two summers prior to that, and had mentioned the fact that we were very interested in this area and had talked about it as I was

teaching empowerment strategies for working under-represented minority communities. So, I was invited to travel to England with this group and present this two-week workshop. It was a very interesting experience because there were so many apparent contradictions. The English...

FELDMAN: Was that the workshop leaders, or U.S. social workers, or the English?

SOLOMON: I think the contradictions were when we look at the positions being taken by the professions in the two countries, given the political structures of the countries. For example, the English, with their Socialist government, had a very difficult time thinking of social work as compatible with a capitalist kind of system. They saw social work as very compatible with the Socialist perspective where there was supposedly the emphasis on equity and sharing. The distance between the boss and the employee, supposedly was not very distant at all, except we certainly found out later that this was more in philosophy than in actuality. The notion of the workplace somehow was one where one earned on the basis of one's effort; their perception of capitalism was of a very oppressive economic system and, therefore, to see social workers being hired by the oppressors, in other words, the company's, CEO's, they didn't quite understand. Why would they want us? Weren't we somehow antithetical to their notion of the profit motive overall, and not humanistic things in terms of the quality of life for the employee? We were able to say to them, "No, we think that social work is very consistent with the capitalist commitment to profit. That, as a matter of fact, one of the most compelling things for the employers is that by having not only a competent, but satisfied workforce, they were going to get the greatest productivity. To the extent that their workforce was ill, emotionally stressed, that was going to lower productivity, so therefore, it was in the best interest. I was trying to help English social workers understand the role of social work in business and industry in the United States. I think it

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that it was somewhat difficult for them to perceive this, particularly when their assessment of the relationship to the profession and the government in England was that it was not a very positive relationship. On the one hand, we were talking about social work operating in a capitalist economy with a government that was essentially accepting some responsibility for social welfare despite the fact that we had a capitalist kind of economy, whereas in England, there was a strong feeling that even though a factory might hypothetically not have a compensation structure that was out of compliance with the notion of each to his own efforts so that the bosses did not get huge amounts more than the workers. There were very clear class differences; English society may have a somewhat Socialist government or political system, but social class differences were much more marked in their business and industry organizations than in ours. The idea, for example, that the company, the owners, the managers, and so on, would ever eat in the same cafeteria or dining room with the workers was totally unheard of, unacceptable. It was interesting here. I was at Security Pacific Bank at a meeting where the President of the bank had a group in his private dining room with all of the kind of service that you would get in an elegant restaurant. When we remarked on it he said, "Well, this is great for me, too, because most of the time I'm eating down in the employee dining room." (Laughter) In England, that wouldn't have happened. He would always have been on his own or with other managers and not eating in the employee dining room. There were very clear differences. We talked, certainly, about the fact that this was not a part of our tradition in this country. We were, in a sense, breaking new ground as we were moving more and more into the workplace, but there was greater and greater recognition of the importance of the workforce in maintaining the productivity of the country, and in actually increasing the productivity of our economy. Proceeding from that, I've continued to have

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correspondence with a couple of the social workers who attended that conference. By the way, the attendees were primarily practitioners, with a small group of faculty from English schools of social services, but the bulk were practitioners who were out in the small towns as well as some of the major cities. We felt that it was a real opportunity to share in terms of what direction the profession seemed to be going.

The real point I'm making is that our School had already begun to articulate the position of social work in the workplace as we were moving toward the development of a concentration in that. This was found to be exciting by people even outside the United States. A second place where I got an opportunity to get a sense of how our School was doing in terms of its commitment to the education and training of social workers who could really make a difference in the kinds of problems that were being encountered in our own country was in Kenya, during the Women's Conference in '85 where--actually, I was there twice--I was there in January with a group of women sponsored by the African/American Institute that was interested in bringing women leaders to Kenya prior to the actual conference itself, to meet with some women leaders in Kenya to see if we were on the same wavelengths on the kinds of issues that were important to women, globally, and how these issues could best be addressed in an international conference like the one that was to happen that summer. I got an opportunity to talk to a number of faculty from the two major institution, one college, one university there in Kenya--particularly about how they dealt with post-colonialism social problems, where now they were not an under-represented minority as we talk in our country about under-represented minorities. They now were the majority, not only the majority, they were in political control of their own destinies, and so it was of interest to me what happens when an under-represented majority, in this case, now comes into

control, what difference does it make in the way the various kinds of problems are addressed. It was very interesting to share our approaches to problems of under-represented minorities because now they were defining under-represented minorities in their own country. There were tribal groups, minorities who were the same color; I could not tell the difference, physically--in terms that they all looked liked Kenyans to me. But they could tell each other, and they knew that they were from different tribes.

FELDMAN: It was more than differences in language.

SOLOMON: Oh, yes, very much so. Very much so in terms of power, the Kikua had been the group in charge of--I shouldn't say in charge--it certainly played the largest leadership role in independence, in getting independence, and so played a major role in the early days of the government, but was not the most highly educated. A smaller group had been a kind of elite group that numerically, not as large, began to gain more and more power just by the power of education and competence. They had these internal kinds of stresses that they had to deal with, and it was interesting as I talked with the social workers there, who, by the way, had been trained in England, not in the United States, talked about how one insures equity in a country where there are tribal traditions, where there are class differences, some that have been actually exacerbated by the former colonial oppressors who gave prior preference to certain groups over others and then after they left, left a kind of residue of hostility and tension and so on that had to be dealt with. I really developed a new appreciation, again, for this whole issue of cross-cultural boundaries, and how one deals with heterogeneity under one political system that thinking of the United States as an extremely heterogeneous society and our multi-ethnic kind of society, but one where most of these groups integrated to the country and therefore have countries of identity where, even

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though they are not now citizens of those countries, there's a kind of cultural identity that still remains. For us, it is how do we take all of these cultural identities under a single political structure and make it work, and will it develop a cohesive society where we feel a kind of common bond? There you had a political group that had been formed by others, not by themselves, by others, and who had put together groups that had never traditionally been together, but now they had geographical boundaries and a national identity that had essentially-- was not their choice but had been imposed from outside. One of the ways we can deal with the fact that we have all of these different identities is that they chose to come here, except the slaves or the native Americans, but for the largest part of our society, it was a matter of choice. Now, because of the experience of slavery, even if you were to ask the most radical African-American activist as to where they perceive their home, it would be here. It would not be Africa. There, on the other hand, you have these tribal identities all now co-existing in a nation that has boundaries that were never defined by anything specific to their culture, and so they still, across these boundaries as easily as anything because never traditionally had those boundaries. Now you have a similar kind of problem of how do we get this heterogeneous society made up of people who may in fact be hostile to each other, to really now be a cohesive community? The social workers talked a lot about cross-cultural differences and cross-cultural identities in their own country in a way that I would never have thought of without that kind of experience. Then again, I was able to talk to them on the basis of some of our own experience in the School of Social Work here, in bringing together students from different ethnic groups who were now having to practice in communities with persons that they had never shared a space or a sense of identity with before. We found that we had a great deal in common.

Perhaps one of the most unsettling questions that was raised at one point was one of the social workers asked, "How is it that we see among the Jewish people in the United States a real connection to Israel? Israel can go to the United States and get a great deal of support for its programs from the Jewish people of the United States. We haven't seen African-Americans in the United States doing the same thing for people in Africa." I had to point out a number of things that I thought did not make the two situations at all the same. For example, it was very clear that people in Africa are in many, many different countries. Israel is a single country, so there can be a very focused kind of sense of needs, and what kind of support and that kind of thing. Africa is many countries and many of them have conflicting goals, objectives, different kinds of government, different levels of commitment to human right, all kinds of things. We can't even identify with a continent when you start trying to talk about a commitment to support for Africans. You almost have to ask where? under what conditions? I thought that that was very different. I think they finally understood, and that was very important because their attitudes toward African-Americans from this country had been somewhat negative; we were not supportive of a lot of the things they were trying to accomplish. They saw the United Nations as a kind of an important entity in assisting them, but not so much the United States, and certainly not African-Americans in the United States.

The important thing is that I think there is a lot to be learned from the interaction of social workers in the United States and social workers in other countries. Especially, as I tried to define the game plan for achieving effective relationships among different ethnic groups, the opportunities provided by the faculty of our School have been excellent. I have certainly felt that I was in any main stream of the faculty concerns that anybody wanted to define--not that I was in

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some peripheral place out here, that I was tolerated on the faculty--that my interests weren't the interests of the total faculty. Certainly there has been great commitment to these concerns by the faculty as a whole. When I say "as a whole," obviously, there are some who commit more than others. But I have found no effort to direct me to something that was more central to the professional kinds of agenda, and my interest is part of that agenda and part of the profession's agenda. As I came over to the Central Administration, I have also found that there's a lot to be said for emphasizing the fact that social work still is useful in almost any social institution that we can identify where there is likely to be conflict between individuals and those institutions. That's what we're all about. The psychiatrist may deal with the intra-psychic life of the individual, but when that same individual comes into conflict with some social institution or his ability to function effectively in those institutions, that's where social work is to try to help reduce that conflict, to resolve that problem. That certainly has been true as I have watched what needs to be done in Central Administration. In fact, I've said to some that this is like coming back to practice after having spent my time in teaching and research. Being in Central Administration has been like finding myself back in practice because I seem constantly to be at the point of trying to resolve problems; problems mostly in inter-personal relationships. When I look at my colleagues in the Administration, I'm often aware of a very different kind of approach that I have to problem-solving than many of them do. That approach is best described as, if I am encountering a problem--if there is a problem to be resolved, the most effective approach is going to be direct, head on, and immediate. It doesn't help if you ignore it or even try to avoid it. It never goes away; it just gets worse. Most of us in social work know that very well. When a problem comes across the desk, you don't put it aside, hoping that if I wait long enough, it will probably go away.

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Or, you don't try to say that we don't really have a problem. You don't try to define it away or deny it. It is okay. There is a problem here. What are we going to do about it?

FELDMAN: I'm very interested in your description of this because from my far more peripheral exposure to working with Dr. Hubbard and Zohrab Kaprilian, and then with Zumberg, but not to the same extent. This was my approach, and this is why they came to have a high regard for social workers. They had no idea that we would face things directly.

SOLOMON: To try and help them. That's right. That's right. That's it exactly. In every chance I get when someone says to me, "Oh, Barbara, that was really great. We'll have to call you when we're in trouble." I keep saying, that's my social work skills that you're talking about because I really want them to get a sense of the profession. It's not just the person; it's how this person has been trained to deal with problem situations. I can't tell how many administrators really don't like tension and conflict, so therefore they are uncomfortable when there are situations that are tense. They do everything they can to avoid them. I've always said, "No, no. That is not the way you deal with it. You have to go directly to the tension and the conflict and say, 'What can we do about this? What is its source and how can we reduce it?' But avoiding it is never going to be the answer."

Going back to my social work training and certainly, the kind of training I've done with social work students, I think doesn't come naturally. It's not something--there may be a few people out there who intuitively may do this, but not very many. This is the kind of thing that comes after a lot of training and a lot of practice, that you can take that kind of approach. In other words, I think it's far more normal. The normal course if for people to avoid conflict and tension. It's not something that is negative, in that sense. That's human nature, almost, to try to

avoid that. We have been specifically trained <u>not</u> to avoid this, but to meet it head on. We can be very effective in organizations, helping those persons who have responsibilities in those organizations deal with tension and conflict that arises.

I also, when I look at the direction the School seems to be going now, and I am somewhat reluctant because I haven't been as close to the School over the past five or six years, obviously, as I have been in the past, but I certainly have had an opportunity to talk to some of the faculty, to know a little bit about the kind of research that they are interested in doing. I think that there is probably going to be a stronger articulation of what kind of research now needs to be done to really move practice forward. For a long time, we struggled to make research a central part of every faculty member's portfolio--in a research university you have to do this--and it's almost like the place where we were in integrating minority content into the curriculum. It was that consciousness-raising stage. Over the past several years, we had put a great deal of emphasis on consciousness-raising among faculty who are first of all practitioners. In a major research university, you've got to be researchers and you've got to do it.

Now the School really is prepared to move to the next stage and say not all research is a good thing to do for the profession. This is particularly important because in some ways there's been some dissonance in the way social work faculties engage in research and what's good for them in the University. Let me explain that. The tenure system says that a junior faculty coming on has six years to develop a portfolio which reflects productivity, research and publication. From the moment they walk in, every junior faculty member is aware of this timeline. There's some research that can only be done over the long run. It's not even longitudinal research. It's just research that requires time for you to do the kind of political things you need to do to prepare

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the opportunity for yourself to be able to get in there and do it. That takes time. It's very often research that's going to be done in an agency setting that's directly related to practice which may be the most important kind of research that we can do. Yet, very often you can't do that research until you're tenured because before then, it's too risky to do that. Other professions have had an advantage because medicine, medical school faculty can do their research right in the hospital. They have a practice setting in which they can do their research. As I've said, social workers in every social institution, there is no single agency that we could have which could at all reflect the many faces of social work practice. I know several schools have tried to have agency-kinds of settings that were developed by the school. But I don't think they've ever been that successful because they have been too small a piece of what social work is all about. When I was Director of the Hamovitch Social Work Research Institute, one of the things that I wanted to do was to see if we could develop for the Institute, a group of affiliated agencies. These agencies would be across the whole spectrum of practice in social work. There would be a quid pro quo. An affiliated agency would give our faculty access to their client population for research purposes. That would be the primary contingency of their association with us. In and for that, they would be able to get a certain amount of technical assistance from the Research Institute for their practitioners who wanted to do their own research in their agency. We would have a kind of trade-off; the technical assistance for the access. I sent out questionnaires to about two hundred agencies in the Southern California, mostly L.A. County but some in Orange County area, to ask about their commitment to social work research, the kinds of research they thought we needed to do. As part of it, I asked the question whether they would be interested in affiliating with the USC Social Work Research Institute and whether, if they did affiliate, whether they would be

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willing to pay an affiliation fee. In other words, if we said okay, you pay $2,000 a year for an affiliation fee, you get the technical assistance, we have access to that could also assist in some small way to some of the kinds of some of the things that the Institute needed in the way of computer time, and all of this kind of thing.

I got back probably over one hundred of the questionnaires that I sent out, which I thought was great. Of those, about seventy, as I recall, in the early seventies, like seventy-one or seventy-two, returns indicated, yes, that they would be very interested in affiliating with the Research Institute. Almost all of them, at that particular time, because it was a time when--it was the first wave of the economic recession that was going on--this was actually, I would say, the beginning of the Reagan Administration, just when Reagan said, "I'm going to get in and cut everything," so there was great consternation. The timing was awful in terms of finding any interest in providing any kind of economic resources to the Institute. But they did say that there was interest there, and if we wanted to work out something like that, they would come to the table to discuss it. I actually moved over to Central Administration about six or seven months after these were returned. I actually almost said no to coming over to Central Administration because I thought I would really like the opportunity to pursue that. It would give our faculty an opportunity to be able to do research with client populations in a broad base that they didn't have to worry about having to go out and develop the relationships and work through all kinds of things that we would already have a kind of accepting environment in which these studies could be conducted. I thought this would reduce some of the disadvantage that we had.

It even goes into the business of teaching research because in the way we teach research, and again, I haven't been as close to it now as I have been in the past, but for most of my career,

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we had a research project or a thesis that had to be completed, but because of the way the program is structured, it didn't really help us to teach research very well. For example, in the arts and sciences, if you're working on a Master's in English or history or political science, you're told you have to do forty-eight units of coursework, and then when you complete your thesis, your Master's. In social work we say we have a two-year Master's program and in that two years, you will so many units and you will complete your Master's project. But we tell people coming in it is a two-year program. It is designed to be a two-year Master's program. In the arts and sciences, they don't put--they say you can take so many units a semester and if you take sixteen units a semester, you can actually complete the course work and your thesis probably in two years. But they do not tell you it is a two-year program. In social work, because we were committed to the two-year program, we often taught research in a way that research just never is done in the real world. That is, you may design a study and then your study design says that you plan to sample this population. Invariably, and I've always said this to students, you can always be sure that it's going to take longer than you thought it was going to take. It always does. It's very difficult to really measure the lengths of time because there are so many contingencies.

FELDMAN: You can't deal with the time because of the people who were involved.

SOLOMON: That's right. You just can't do it. Invariably, you find yourself making compromises that you would never do in the real world. If you're really out there in the real world, you wouldn't stop here with this sample that is far too small to do what you really like to. You'd just go on and take the time that would be required to do that. You wouldn't settle for a lot of things that we ended up settling for that I don't think help students really understand how research is done and how it ought to be done, therefore really getting the kind of gratification that

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can come from doing a piece of research and doing it well and being able then to share your findings. Again, it seemed to me that with an opportunity to have the kind of environment that you would have having ongoing research, and have students then connect always to ongoing research so that they would be able maybe to have a piece of this, but at the end of it, not to say, well, that's it, it's over. Well, this is all that you were able to do, and you did a credible job on it, but you, of course, see how the whole piece is to be done, and having participated in this, you will continue to get the kind of progress reports and final report on this when it's ultimately done because you were part of it. It just seemed to me that that's a more rationale way, and one much more likely to produce social workers who know how research really ought to be done even though they have not had an opportunity to go through an entire piece of it personally and on their own.

At the time that I came over to Central Administration, the question was, do I really want to stay here and really make this happen, or do I want to now take on this new challenge. Well I took on the new challenge, but I still have retained, I think, a commitment to seeing research, social work research in the Research University, being done in a way that is compatible with the Research University, but also, perhaps even more important, compatible with what the profession needs and what social work research training ought to be. I participated on the Research Task Force that the National Institute of Mental Health established. I guess now it's about six years ago. We met for three years; I think the report came out three years ago. The National Institute of Mental Health established this task force not only to study how and what kind of social work research the Institute needed to support and what the profession needed--so that we were given the charge to look not just at social work and mental health, but social work research, period. We

really did do that by gathering a great deal of data from schools of social work all over the country, reviewing all kinds of research reports done by social workers, assessing the state of the art in terms of where we were in the profession, but even more importantly, where we needed to go. We're beginning to see some payoff from that. We're beginning to see that in the Institute's announcement of the Social Work Centers of Excellence--I just participated in the second cycle of review for schools of social works submitting proposals for Centers of Excellence. In the first cycle, none were actually approved. In the second cycle, I think one was approved. These Centers of Excellence are to be interdisciplinary, but social work is the primary discipline. They are to pull other mental health disciplines into the Centers. They are to take advantage of senior researchers who can train social work doctoral students in research methods, all the way from research design, sampling, statistical analysis, all of these things. The major purpose of these Centers is training. It is to train researchers who are skilled in the most sophisticated methods of social research, particularly as it related to mental health.

We submitted a proposal in the first cycle. It was not funded, but we were given some excellent suggestions which, I am sure, will mean that we can be funded when it is resubmitted for the next cycle. The current director of the Hamovitch Social Work Research Institute has, in fact, been in Washington over this past year, and part of her responsibility has been assistance in the development of this program. So we are feeling very good about having absolutely the best opportunity to have our Center's proposal actually funded by having someone who has been involved in the development of it as the director of the Center. When Kathy Ell returns to the faculty this coming year, one of the first things on the agenda will be the re-submission of the proposal, and the likelihood is that we will have established here at U.S.C., one of the National

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Centers of Excellence, the National Social Work Research Centers of Excellence. This then for me means that it will be possible for the Hamovitch Research Center to move in many of the directions that I had hoped we would be able to by actually having a program of ongoing research involving a number of agencies out in the community that are affiliated with the Center so that our students will really have first-hand knowledge of how really excellent research is conducted. Our Doctoral students can come out of our Doctoral program truly prepared to be productive faculty anywhere in the country. I have great optimism that our School is on the threshold of being an even greater School than it has been. Of course, we were number seven in *U.S. News and World Report* out of one hundred and twenty or so. I fully expect that over the next five years, we'll be up near the top.

Well, I think that's the end. (Laughter) Are there any other questions?

FELDMAN: Well, aside from refining of research system and focus and goals, what are other things you think we should keep in mind for the School's future?

SOLOMON: I think the Strategic Plan of the University is very important for the School of Social work because I think there is so much in that Strategic Plan which places the School of Social Work as a key player in not just its own strategic plan, but in moving the Strategic Plan of the University forward. I say that because there are several initiatives--well there are four initiatives--in the University's Strategic Plan. Three of them have some relevance for Social Work. For example, one of them has to do with the University's conceptualization of undergraduate education, which at first blush would seem not to include Social Work at all. But the way the University intends to make its undergraduate program unique, is to connect it to its professional schools. The integration of professional education and undergraduate education is

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seen, particularly in our General Education courses, as one of the things that can make U.S.C.'s undergraduate program different from a lot of other peer institutions. We have more professional schools than any other private university in the country. We would like an opportunity, therefore, to say that if you come to U.S.C., your general education courses will be giving you a strong rounding in the Liberal Arts, but that the Liberal Arts are often conceived from the perspective of the society as a whole and the kinds of problems that are encountered with society. We may have a general education course on Concepts of Equality of Justice taught by a team from Law, from Social Work, and from Political Science. When it gets to the Arts and the History of Arts, we have the professional schools of Theater and Cinema and so on, that can be integrated into this whole general education arena. How Social Work can be included in the future in a way that will give undergraduate students a greater understanding of the profession, of the value of the profession to society and the kinds of practice that social workers do, I think is going to be a real challenge for the School in the future. But if it happens again, it may certainly increase our opportunities to bring some of the best and the brightest into the profession, through their exposure early in their undergraduate education, to social work values, social work issues, social work concerns.

Another of the Strategic Plans Initiatives has to do with interdisciplinary programs at the University. One of my major responsibilities next year as Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs is to establish a task force that is going to be looking at how one structures the reward system for faculty in the University to encourage interdisciplinary kinds of programs. Again, our program of Inter-professional Initiatives of Social Work, has really taken the lead role in, and may be a prototype for other kinds of interdisciplinary programs. It's going to be extremely important for

the University to come up with a way of rewarding faculty who engage in that and not punish them by making it more difficult for them to get tenure, more difficult for them get allocation of tuition, and so on, because they are now collaborating rather than taking it all themselves. That has to be worked on. It's interesting that almost every one of the responses to the Provost's memo encouraging faculty and deans to submit to him a proposal for an interdisciplinary initiatives led to one in the health area, and one that looked at Southern California and how we could use it as a laboratory for our faculty research. Every proposal that I have seen has included social work. This says to me that social work is being perceived by these other disciplines as a key player in any kind of interdisciplinary program that we may be, as a University, supporting and providing resources for in the very near future. Again, I think the School is in a good place because not only are its issues at the heart of so much of applied research in general, but it has already begun to move in that direction even before the Strategic Plan was even started so that it's now in a place where it has experience and can actually engage in these kinds of interdisciplinary discussions with concrete examples of how one can move toward an interdisciplinary program.

FELDMAN: These responses that identify Social Work as one of the players, then, are really responsive to the role of Social Work and recognition of the School.

SOLOMON: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. I just got an announcement that one group will be meeting on Monday, and this is the health initiative, and it has a kind of a tentative umbrella title of "The Center for Health and Human Performance." It's looking at health broadly defined, so it includes the allied health professions: it includes social work, it includes psychology, it includes bio-medical engineering, it includes a number of these disciplines at the table, and it includes

Social Work as one of those invited to participate in this discussion.

FELDMAN: That's gratifying.

SOLOMON: Yes. I think that's very important. The emphasis on applied research cannot help but draw on the expertise of the Social Work faculty as we begin to address critical social problems that we are facing right now. We will need everything from family violence, abortion, surrogate parenting, how to deal with adoptions--the case where the four-year old was taken from his adoptive parents and given to the birth parents four years later--all of those are issues that are on the front pages of our newspapers day after day after day. Those are the very issues that social work research is addressing. I can't help but feel that the School will be a major player in the future in almost three quarters of the initiatives brought forward under the impetus of our Strategic Plan at the University. That's another reason why it can't help but become more and more prominent, nationally and internationally.

FELDMAN: Good. I think you have given us--because it's not just me, fascinated as I have been--a very good insight about where you are coming from, where you think we are, and where we should be going, and I thank you.

SOLOMON: You're very welcome.