

and aged families the net benefits are minus \$690 million and plus \$690 million, respectively, and the average net benefit rates for the two groups are minus 0.23 percent and plus 2.76 percent. For each dollar of tax benefit, the nonaged have a net benefit of about minus 80 cents and the aged have a net benefit of about plus 80 cents. Regardless of income class, the net benefit is negative among the nonaged and positive among the aged. The net benefit for the nonaged is roughly proportional from \$1,000–\$1,999 to \$4,000–\$4,999 and progressive above \$4,000; for the aged it is regressive under \$3,000 and progressive above \$2,000.

MOLLIE ORSHANSKY: COUNTING THE POOR: BEFORE AND
AFTER FEDERAL INCOME-SUPPORT
PROGRAMS

In 1959, 24 percent of the Nation's households—counting as households both one-person units and families of two or more persons—had so little income as to be counted poor. Seven years later, only 17.7 percent had too little money income to support the number dependent on them. What is perhaps of greater significance than the general improvement is that more of the poor in 1966 were persons of limited earning capacity or those whom age, home responsibilities, race discrimination, or other factors kept out of the labor force altogether.

Children—particularly if they live in a home without a father—and old people are at a disadvantage, compared with persons aged 18 to 64, when it comes to earning. The number of children under age 18 being reared in poverty went down from 16.6 million in 1959 to 12.5 million in 1966, but the number near poor dipped by only 0.4 million to reach 6.6 million. All told, even in 1966, after a continued run of prosperity and steadily rising family income, one-fourth of the Nation's children were in families living in poverty or hovering just above the poverty line.

As a group, persons aged 65 or older were even worse off than the youngsters. Those counted poor in 1966 numbered 5.4 million, the same number as the count of aged poor 2 years earlier, and only half a million less than the count in 1959. In 1966, the 1.2 million aged couples in poverty represented one in five of all families counted poor; in 1959, these couples had accounted for only one in six of the total. In similar fashion, the financial fate of the aged living alone was better than it once had been, but it still spelled poverty for the majority (55 percent). As compared with the situation in 1959 when aged unrelated individuals accounted for fewer than one-fifth of all households tagged poor, in 1966 every fourth household in poverty was that of an aged person living alone.

Such findings did not signify that these elderly persons as a group had less income than they used to have. It was rather that, thanks to social security and related programs, more of them had enough income to try going it alone—choosing privacy, albeit the privacy of poverty, rather than being an “other relative” in the home of their children. But despite spectacular improvement aided in large meas-