THE PROBLEMS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION ARE ONES THAT MUST INEVITABLY ENGAGE THE ATTENTION OF HISTORIANS OF THAT ERA. DESPITE THE CENTRALITY OF THIS ISSUE THERE HAS BEEN NO COMPREHENSIVE OR SYSTEMATIC EFFORT MADE TO DELINIATE THE MAGNITUDE OR EXPLOR THE TOPOLOGY OF EMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT OF SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS. THE FATE OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS HAS RECEIVED ONLY THE MOST CURSORY ATTENTION FROM HISTORIANS, SOCIOLOGISTS AND ECONOMISTS, YET IT IS A TOPIC THAT SHOULD BE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO THE HISTORICAL PROFESSION BOTH BECAUSE OF THE HIGH RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE ACADEMIC PROFESSIONS TODAY AND BECAUSE OF THE INCREASE DURING THIS CENTURY IN THE TOTAL NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS IN THE AMERICAN ECONOMY.

If the peculiar problems of unemployed professionals are not fully comprehended and ameliorated, disastrous political and social consequences such as occurred in Germany and other European nations in the 1930's cannot be fully comprehended. Walter Kolschnig pointed out in 1937 that a large number of unemployed and proletarianized professionals in Germany were attracted to the Nazi Party because they saw in the party and its program a chance for career advancement and employment. Another consequence of the proletarianization of intellectuals was a depreciation in the public mind of the intellect and an increase in irrational political behavior, points Karl Mannheim made rather forcefully in his Mensch and Gesellschaft in Zeitalte des Umbaus (1935).

Yet, despite the pertinence and importance of the subject, the reasons
for scholarly neglect of the issue are not difficult to identify. First, scholars have observed that in both absolute and relative numbers the more educated members of society enjoyed a higher rate of employment than the unskilled. It has also been suggested that owing to declining commodity prices and to the fact that professional salaries did not fall relative to others, the educated were the group least injured by the economic ills of the period. While these observations no doubt are valid in the early Depression period, they were seemingly less valid as the period of economic decline lengthened. In the 1937 Unemployment Census the per cent of totally unemployed professionals was 16.6, those engaged in emergency work was 16.5, and those partially unemployed was 15.2. In fact in this census, except for clerks and servants, professionals suffered the highest rates of unemployment and subemployment of all classes of workers. The explanation for this rise in the rate of professional unemployment during the Thirties was an initial reluctance of employers to let highly trained personnel go, followed by a longer than average duration of unemployment. These figures were also influenced by a rising rate of female unemployment owing to increasing unemployment among teachers and a growing discrimination against women, especially married women in the labor market. Even if professionals did suffer lower rates of unemployment and misery during the Depression, they are worthy of study. As a group they partook in the economic dislocations of the period, and their loss of skills and hope presented a genuine social problem, one worthy of study though an examination of the issue involves acute methodological problems.

The primary methodological problem that faces all historians of employment and unemployment during the Great Depression is that available statistics are both inaccurate and fragmentary. The quantifications that would be necessary for an elegant statistical study of the professional group presents insuperable difficulties. The available data are often impressionistic and bedeviled by problems of definition and exclusion. The statistical sources lack uniformity in the criteria used to determine who to include in their highest occupational grouping and in their definition of 'professional.' For example, data on the Philadelphia labor market, constituting one of the most definitive microcosmic sources for studying the changing occupational picture during the Depression, puts professionals in a group including "Executive, professional and semi-professional occupations." In the same period, the Bureau of the Census separated professionals from "Proprietors, managers and officials" and the Department of Labor's Monthly Labor Review had a classification for "Professionals and semi-professionals" but at the same
time unemployment figures for specific industries included professional workers who had been employed in these industries. The fact that the available statistics defy integration is only one of the problems encountered in defining and quantifying professional unemployment.

Contemporaries also found it particularly difficult to accurately enumerate unemployed middle-class people. The most profound obstacle was that in many cases relief agencies were entrusted with the responsibility for collecting unemployment figures. Middle-class professionals, largely for reasons of pride, were unlikely to seek relief until they had exhausted all other resources. Owing to greater savings, equity in property, and familial financial resources, the complete depletion of resources of professionals took longer or never took place. The young professional who could move with his financially secure family never reached the relief rolls and may never have been counted among the unemployed in most studies. The discrepancies between the relatively abundant relief statistics and less abundant employment office and survey material makes this point absolutely clear. In Philadelphia in 1933, 6.1 per cent of those who applied at the State Employment Office classified themselves as executive or professional, and 4.4 per cent of the unemployed counted in a city employment survey classified themselves in a similar manner, but this same occupational group only comprised 1.3 per cent of those on relief.

Superior financial resources were only one reason why professionals were not counted on the relief rolls. Another reason was that professionals had more education which allowed them greater latitude in job re-classification. Many professionals accepted non-professional jobs and did not appear in any set of statistics. The chemist who became a lab assistant or the lawyer who became a title-searcher never applied for relief; neither, most likely, did the unknown young man who wrote the following letter:

Dear Sir:

Could you advise me about the possibilities of securing a position as a houseman or butler? My aged mother is dependent upon me for support and although I am a graduate engineer I have been unable to secure any employment whatsoever in that field. It may seem peculiar that I should seek work as a servant but my background, both educational and social, are such that I can quite capably fill a position of that nature. I can think of no other type of work in which there might be openings at the present time.

When professionals did reach the relief rolls and eligibility, particu-
larly in the early days of work relief, they were hesitant to acknowledge their professional training. This hesitancy extended into the early WPA period when many skilled and professional persons classified themselves as unskilled because they believed that they had a better chance to receive work relief if classified as unskilled laborers. In the heavy construction programs of the PWA this tendency towards underrating skills among non-construction workers was undoubtedly accentuated.

A professional person accepting a non-professional job, or classifying himself as unskilled, or taking unskilled work assigned by relief officials, must be considered "underemployed." John Garraty has noted that the term "underemployment" not only applies to factory workers on short time and to workers in seasonal industries but also in a somewhat different sense to "persons who work long and hard at jobs that do not make efficient use of their skills and energies—a college graduate driving a taxi, a mechanic pumping gasoline." The concept of underemployment is one of particular significance in discussing professionals because it is so often resorted to in slack economic periods. It was a mode of adjustment not measured in the Depression period and one that is just beginning to be quantified today. Recently economists have found that the number of opportunities available in an area of training provide the best criteria for judging the status of professional employment because for the educated worker the quality of jobs, not the number employed or unemployed, is "the principal nonprice mode of adjustment."

Professionals cannot be only unemployed, or by Garraty's definition, "underemployed," but they also can be functionally underutilized. The term 'functional underutilization' is one that best describes the self employed person who manages to remain in his profession though only a fraction of his time and skill are being productively employed. While some professionals are functionally underutilized in all economic environments due to perceived lack of skill or to geographical overcrowding, this problem was acute during the Thirties. The concept of functional underutilization is, perhaps, best studied by examining income levels of self employed professionals. Some work has been done in this area, but much remains to be done. Little has been done that relates directly to the Depression, and this group was not counted in unemployment studies and was generally barred from relief work. The WPA generally barred self employable professionals, even if they were not earning a living.

All categories of professional occupational displacement are amenable to topological examination. The first step in making this examination involves a definition of terms. "Professional," as used by historians and
sociologists, lacks precise meaning, but certain attributes appear in most definitions: the professional has specialized training and a longer preparatory period than those in other occupations; his endeavors are more intellectual than other workers and less likely to be directly related to the production, exchange, and distribution of material goods; the practice of a profession is often legally recognized by some sort of licensure and these licenses are often controlled by members of the profession; the professional is likely to belong to an association which establishes criteria for the profession. If one uses these basic criteria, accounting, architecture, some branches of engineering, dentistry, law, medicine, the ministry, and the academic disciplines qualified as full fledged professions by the Thirties. In varying degrees of emphasis, these professions will be the focus of this study. Some attention will also be directed to the emerging professions of school teaching and social work. As previously noted, the term "unemployment" when it focuses on professionals must encompass in its definition not only the complete absence of economically rewarding work but also the concepts of underemployment and functional underutilization.

In addition to problems of definition, studies on professional unemployment present unique problems of geographical locus. The fact that professionals vary widely in their potentialities for geographical mobility can be logically derived. Those in the academic professions operate in a nationwide employment market as do engineers; physicians, accountants, and lawyers have varying degrees of geographical restriction owing to licensing procedures and other complexities of certification. The variability in potential employment markets renders it difficult to discuss all professional employment in national terms. In the case of professionals restricted in geographical scope, an accurate rendering of their job picture can only be drawn on a local basis. On these foundations some generalizations can then be made to apply to the profession as a whole. In this study when local sources are most pertinent, they will be drawn from the Philadelphia metropolitan area for two reasons: first its typicality as the urban location of most professionals, and second because of the availability and comprehensive nature of the Philadelphia Labor Market Studies.

In the Thirties Philadelphia's employment picture reflected that of large Northeastern cities. During the Twenties it had an approximately 7 per cent rate of unemployment. The rate rose to an approximately 25 per cent level in the Spring of 1931 giving the city the third highest percentage of unemployed of nineteen major cities. For a Northeastern city, Philadelphia's rate was high but not disproportionate. Data from
New York, a city with a mid-Depression unemployment rate similar to Philadelphia's, will be utilized to supplement Philadelphia sources.\textsuperscript{24} It will also be used as a check on the reliability of the Philadelphia data.

The first industries hard hit by the Depression were capital goods, other durable goods, and construction industries. Drastic cutbacks in these industries made architects and engineers the first professionals to suffer high percentages of unemployment. In New York City, the home of many of the nation's major architectural firms, 1200 architects and other architectural workers had applied for help to the Architects' Emergency Committee by September of 1931, and that number rose by 300 in the following month.\textsuperscript{25} The Architects' Emergency Committee, representing a professional group more responsive to its member's needs than most, instituted a program to find semi-professional work for unemployed members. In October of 1931 it announced the availability of architects for "repairs to estates, country and golf clubs, summer homes and farms,"\textsuperscript{26} noting that unemployed architects would do the work at less than half the ordinary cost and would confine their charges to materials, a small amount of cash, and a place to sleep. Though the success of the program was never announced, its introduction illustrates the perceived potential for underemployment among professional groups.

At a time when most of its members were functionally underutilized, New York's architects attempted to expand the normal range of professional activity. They did this in preference to restricting entry into the profession. The Architects' Emergency Committee further attempted to aid unemployed members by opening an emergency drafting room to give young architects the chance to design homes for people of moderate means and by architectural design competitions allowing unemployed architects a chance to enhance their professional credentials.\textsuperscript{27} They also entered into a project with Columbia University to graph "energy and manpower use over history" which employed thirty-six unemployed draftsmen and engineers and they organized sight-seeing tours of the city led by unemployed architects.\textsuperscript{28} To finance these activities, the emergency committee sponsored a large number of fund raising events. Their activities are of interest because the N.Y. architects were particularly sensitive to the major problems faced by the young professional: the need to acquire experience and credentials to compete on the job market in a period where there was little work and where the available work was monopolized by experienced workers.

The situation for architects on the national level was at least as bad as it was in New York City. According to figures collected by the Dodge
Corporation Reports for thirty-seven states east of the Rockies in 1932, architects had less than one-seventh the amount of work they had in 1928. The Pacific States were less drastically affected, but even there the falling off in business was severe. This catastrophic decline in contracts (in round figures from $3,600,000,000 in 1928 to $500,000,000 in 1932) led to both unemployment and diminished incomes. It also led to the closing of roughly 4,000 offices and the loss of 13,000 architects from the profession in the first four years of the Depression.  

The decline in available work for architects had a number of unexpected side effects. The first was that smaller offices frequently fared better than larger ones. This decentralization of the profession was promoted by the lower overhead costs of the smaller operations and the ability of smaller offices to profitably undertake the type of work available: the design of individual dwellings and the alteration of smaller commercial buildings. Another unanticipated effect was the number of new entries into the profession. A Dodge Report listed 9,700 new architects in the first four years of the Depression. Many of these “new entries” were draftsmen, specification writers, and superintendents of construction who were graduates of architectural schools but who had never before practiced architecture per se. With the dramatic decrease in large commercial construction, many of these men set up individual practices and competed with established firms for small jobs. However, numerous individuals were quickly driven out of architectural practice and the profession was characterized by tremendous turnover during the first depression years. Talbot Hamlin, writing on the effect of the depression on his profession, noted that the slump had changed architectural style. On one hand new designs tended towards the “joyless conservatism” which characterized most of the government building of the period, for example the Department of Commerce Building in Washington, and on the other towards the eccentricity and extravagance of the World’s Fair building in Chicago. He perceived both to be symptoms of exhaustion and despair in the profession.  

The New Deal building projects were effective in promoting employment in the architectural profession. By March of 1935 there were only 114 architects on relief in New York State and in Philadelphia only 33 were counted as unemployed in May, 1936. While these figures probably reflect an absolute decline in architectural unemployment by the mid thirties, the continuing effects of underemployment and functional underutilization were undoubtedly still felt in the profession.  

The employment picture of engineers paralleled that of architects. Broadus Mitchell pointed out that at the end of 1932 more than one
tenth of the engineers were unemployed, and "at one or another time between the beginning of 1930 and the end of 1934 more than one third of the engineers had some period of unemployment and half of those who became unemployed were out of work for more than a year." This was out of a stock of about 128,000 degreeed engineers. The only engineers exempt from the high unemployment rate of the profession were those concerned with the operation and maintenance of the machines of essential industries such as the utilities. This group had reduced incomes but most retained their jobs.

Young engineers entering the profession after 1929 had the greatest frequency of unemployment; half were unemployed at some time from 1930–1934. Older engineers though less frequently unemployed were out of work longer.

Unemployed among foreign born engineers seems to have been disproportionately high. Of the 4,525 unemployed engineers registered by the Professional Engineers' Committee on Unemployment for the Metropolitan District of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut 793 were educated abroad. In October of 1931 when Amtorg, the Russian foreign trade monopoly, advertised for 6,000 skilled workers to take jobs in Russia, they got over 100,000 responses. In one morning's batch of 280 responses there were 58 from engineers. Forty per cent of all the respondents were foreign born. Classically aliens have joined women and racial minorities as among the first to be dismissed in periods of economic hardship.

By 1935 engineers whose skills were applicable to government construction projects were in considerable demand. In October there was a shortage of 800 skilled construction engineers for WPA openings. The fact that experience was demanded for these jobs may have eliminated many young construction engineers from consideration. Nevertheless, there was still a considerable amount of unemployment in the engineering profession. The per cent of engineers on relief in 1935 indicates that at this point in the Depression engineers were still suffering high rates of unemployment. In a table compiled by the WPA showing the per cent distribution of professional and technical workers on relief, engineers had a higher percentage than any other group of males except "Musicians and Teachers of Music" and "Other Semiprofessional Workers." In 1935 the New Deal programs were not working as well for engineers as they were for architects. The fate of engineers in the late Depression is difficult to substantiate. Engineering employment is believed to grow quickly in periods of economic growth and surely leads others in periods of large defense appropriations.
Contrary to popular belief that owing to increases in bankruptcies, foreclosures and crime, the law is a depression proof profession and that the New Deal provided endless opportunities for young lawyers, the law was one of the hardest hit of professions. Lawyers in major cities such as Philadelphia and New York suffered major declines in income and jobs. In 1930 the New York County Bar Association opened up an employment bureau and within eight months handled 3,000 unemployed lawyers, finding jobs for only forty of them. The Bar Chairman estimated that of 18,000 lawyers in New York only 10,000 were making a decent living. This at a time when the legal profession in America had fewer lawyers per 100,000 in population (140) than it had in 1900 (151). In 1933 the New York City Bar took an income survey of 15,000 lawyers which showed that 50 per cent had incomes of less than $3,000 and 33⅓ per cent had incomes of less than $2,000. These figures indicate that many of New York’s lawyers were doing about as well, or badly, as the population in general.

The job picture for New York’s lawyers had not improved appreciably by 1935 when they mobilized in the Lawyers’ Security League to seek government help for members of the profession. Some lawyers were receiving help from the city of New York, but many were eliminated from WPA programs owing to the necessity of being certified for home relief before qualifying for work relief. Many young lawyers, though destitute, were refusing home relief because they believed that accepting it could do potential damage to their future practices. The Lawyers’ Security League with its 1200 members lobbied for additional government jobs and against the incursions of nonprofessionals into the legal field at a time when there were an estimated 6,000 needy lawyers in New York City alone. They met a degree of success in speeding funding for WPA jobs for lawyers in a land registration project and in an indexing project in the city corporate counsel’s office. If the situation in New York was typical of the nation as a whole, the small number of lawyers enumerated in the WPA’s Survey of Workers on Relief in the United States in March 1935 does not accurately reflect the employment picture for lawyers but indicates rather the reluctance of lawyers to apply for relief. The funding of the New York City lawyers’ projects in July of 1935 indicated a slight change in this situation.

As a major city with an open Bar, the situation in Philadelphia was probably similar to New York, though in the suburban counties surrounding Philadelphia, the employment and income picture for lawyers was quite different. In the Thirties, admission to the Bar in Pennsylvania was controlled on the county level by the courts and its
appointed Board of Law Examiners, both of whom were responsive to the desires of the county Bar associations. In early 1933 the Montgomery Bar Association, representing the largest of Philadelphia's suburban Bars, became concerned about increasing economic competition and about a perceived oversupply of lawyers in the county. Following the lead of Delaware County in February of that year the association by a 49-9 vote suggested to the court that an 1834 statute be invoked to allow judges to control the number of lawyers admitted to the Bar. This was done, and until the war years, not more than four new lawyers were admitted to the Bar in Montgomery County in any year. As would be expected in a situation where membership in a desirable group is controlled by a few persons, in this case the Board of Law Examiners, charges of nepotism and discrimination were rampant and a study of admissions tends to substantiate these charges. Sons and relatives of practicing lawyers were unlikely to wait for entrance while members of ethnic minorities, Democrats, and lawyers admitted to the Philadelphia Bar, a group which imposed no numerical restrictions, were left waiting at the gate for considerable periods of time. Many young lawyers who were without influence and did not have the financial resources to wait for years for admission were successfully discouraged from practicing in the county.

The active members of the Montgomery Bar did not perceive themselves as discriminating but rather justified their restrictions on the basis of protecting professional ethics and exercising professional rights. They believed that an "overcrowded Bar is not conducive to the proper administration of justice" inasmuch as members of the Bar, besides coping with reduced incomes, were being forced to engage in "competitive practice" and that young lawyers would, by the force of necessity, be compelled to resort to unethical practice that could only lower the Bar in the estimation of the public and lessen its influence. They also assured themselves that "the practice of law is not a right but a privilege" and consequently could be granted or denied at will without any allegations of illegality or impropriety.

The Montgomery Bar did not restrict its protection of its prerogatives to the institution of a quota system. Throughout the Depression and for many years thereafter it consistently rejected a reciprocal relationship with the Philadelphia Bar, fought uniform rules of court that might have been a prelude to state-wide practice, and enforced a principal office rule that required any lawyer practicing in the county courts to maintain his residence and principal office in the county.

There is no evidence to suggest that the members of the Bar of
Montgomery County suffered unduly from the nationwide depression. Bankruptcies, foreclosures and other normal and court appointed business kept most lawyers in one of the nation's most prosperous counties from feeling the pinch of need, but this was done at the expense of the young and those without influence. Their actions represent one mode open to well organized professionals in periods of economic stress.

It might be well to note that not every young person denied the privilege of practicing law in their home county or certification as an accountant in their home state became destitute. Migration to areas with less restrictive processes of certification was always a possibility as were business careers. Even in periods of prosperity many certified individuals never actually practice their profession but instead engage in businesses where their professional skills are more indirectly utilized. The point to be kept in mind, however, is that in a period of economic decline, business careers could not provide a safety valve for overcrowding in the professions as they had in previous decades.

The Depression not only influenced who practiced law but also how law was practiced. In large urban areas where legal specialization was highly developed, the profession underwent significant transformations. A buyer's market for legal services affected lawyers without established reputations most significantly, but large urban firms also experienced dramatic declines in the amount of business they handled. Much of their business had been connected with the issuance and supervision of corporate securities during the Twenties and had been handled on a retainer basis. The crash destroyed this facet of their business and with it went many of the large retainers. Many corporations dropped their connections with large law firms in favor of hiring a junior in-house counsel for normal legal work. In this case, as in the case of young architects, the young could underbid the better established who were burdened by high overhead. In some large legal offices the loss of corporate work was partially offset by a dramatic increase in litigation, but much of this new litigation was of a petty nature and not a source of high incomes. Real estate lawyers also suffered grievous declines in income. Real-property transfers, the main source of their income, were almost nonexistent and foreclosures were relatively unprofitable. Lawyers in general practice in major cities suffered similar declines in income as an increasing percentage of legal business emanating from their normal clientele was handled through legal aid societies. In New York City the number of legal-aid cases increased thirty-four per cent between 1928 and 1931. In Philadelphia a Defender Association to
handle criminal cases was established in 1934. The number and importance of free legal services increased significantly during the decade.\textsuperscript{52}

The medical profession primarily felt the impact of depression through declining incomes. In 1929 the average physician earned $5224, an amount which declined to $2948 in 1933. Relatively their income fell even more precipitously than lawyers who averaged $5534 in 1929 and $3868 in 1933.\textsuperscript{53} The response of the A.M.A. to this situation was to restrict entry into the profession through their control of medical education. Indicative of the A.M.A.’s attitude is the 1934 statement by the association’s president calling for the closing of medical schools: “A fine piece of education work could well be done if we were to use only half of the 70-odd medical schools in the U.S.”\textsuperscript{4} Pressures brought by the A.M.A. through its Council on Medical Education were effective in reducing enrollments in medical schools in the ensuing years. In 1935 there were 500 fewer students registered in acceptable medical schools than there had been in the previous year, and the figure continued to fall in the following years. There were 7578 acceptances to medical school in 1933 but only 6211 in 1939.\textsuperscript{55} This was in a decade in which the total number of persons receiving doctorates rose substantially in partial response to high unemployment among college graduates.\textsuperscript{56} These restrictionist policies in medical education could make no substantial impact on the income of physicians during the depression decade, but they would serve in future decades to bring physician’s incomes into historic disproportion with those of other professions. The negative impact of a shortage of physicians during future periods of war, growth and prosperity is well documented.

Depression did not reach the nation’s college campuses until 1932–3 and the worst effects of it began to dissipate by 1934–5 when registrations in public institutions began to grow again. As in other professions such as law, it was the young who bore the brunt of unemployment: “For those who had places at the onset of the academic depression and who held the rank above that of instructor, there was no real problem of displacement.”\textsuperscript{57} In a report on “The Economic Condition of the Profession” in 1932, Committee Z of the A.A.U.P. noted that in the thirty-eight institutions surveyed there was a shrinkage of 211 faculty places and that of these 191 came from the ranks of instructor or part-time assistant.\textsuperscript{58} While some professorships remained unfilled, even during the worst of the Depression the number of associate professors continued growing and tenure continued to be granted to the most promising young faculty members.\textsuperscript{59}
For most faculty members the effects of the economic disaster that befell the country were more limited than in other professions. Academic salaries declined, but they declined less than those of other professionals. In the period 1928-9 to 1933-4 academic salaries declined approximately 15 per cent, but the salaries of engineers declined 62.2 per cent, physicians 42.9 per cent, and the clergy 26.4 per cent. While academic salaries were declining from a lower base than those of many other professionals, these cuts were at least partially compensated for by declines in commodity prices. Among employed academics, the worse effects of the Depression were felt in the lowest ranks. Those in the lower ranks assumed most of the increase in teaching load that 40 per cent of the institutions added, received fewer promotions in relationship to higher ranks, and got the same percentage cuts in income from their lower base salaries. For academics of all ranks the incursions into academic freedom increased as the financial positions of institutions deteriorated. At the A.A.U.P. convention in 1932, it was noted that in 1929 only seventeen new cases of threatened removal were brought to the organization, but in 1932 it had already risen to sixty-six. Most of the new cases came from smaller institutions and from those in the South.

The greatest unmet problem in higher education during the Depression was securing employment for new Ph.D's being produced in increasing numbers. The needs of these new graduates, and of the instructors terminated by institutions owing to the economic decline, did not cause the academic establishment enough concern to initiate studies of their occupational placement once they left the shelter of the academy. It was believed that many were ultimately employed by the government. It was acknowledged that most Ph.D's who had been terminated or never employed would probably never secure academic jobs: a whole cohort of trained professionals would be lost because recruitment, when it came, would be directed towards the most recent graduates.

For the older segment of the professorate, the academic profession in the Depression period continued to provide the security that has always been one of the chief compensations for a relatively low professional salary structure. The impact of hard times for academic institutions first was felt by maintenance staffs, then clericals and eventually by instructors and untenured assistant professors. Those at the lower ranks were driven away from academic careers and it is believed that in this group were a disproportionate number of women.

In terms of the numbers involved and the degree of desperation
experienced, few other professions compared with school teaching. In the first year or two of the Depression, teachers fared relatively well. In the Fall of 1931, when the strain on the school systems began to show, most teachers had not yet taken pay cuts and the profession had, in fact, absorbed displaced professionals from other fields. Education seemed to be living up to its reputation as a secure profession, but by the following year the situation changed dramatically. By 1932–3 nearly one third of a million children were without education owing to closed schools. In Alabama by April, 1933, eighty-five per cent of the schools were closed and the rest were running part-time. Some counties went back to a three-month school term. Teacher’s salaries were slashed up to forty per cent and much of this was unpaid, or if paid, paid partially in script. In other Southern states teachers went back to “boarding out” and others camped out in school buildings. This applied to white teachers in white schools. “But it is a safe assumption that in those States and counties which normally spend from three to sixty times as much on their white as on their colored schools, the sufferings of the Negro school teachers and of the Negro school population have been disproportionately heavier.”

The situation in urban schools was better than in the rural South, but the plight of Chicago’s teachers was a national scandal. The teachers in the nation’s second largest city were employed but suffered most of the ravages of unemployment owing to the city’s inability to pay them. In May of 1932, Chicago’s teachers had been paid only five out of the preceding thirteen months. The situation of New York City’s employed teachers was not as appalling, but they also were feeling the effects of economic collapse in larger classes, increased work, reduced sick pay and six to ten per cent pay reductions.

The number of unemployed teachers in New York City in 1933 was estimated at from 5,000 to 15,000. There were 5,000 on the eligible list and another 10,000 who had a teacher’s education had either failed the certifying test or had no opportunity to take it. The city used this reserve army as per diem substitutes who received lower pay, no salary increments and had no chance to secure tenure. The fact that the appointment of per diem substitutes had been removed from the merit system made them defenseless against political injustices and favoritism.

The response of educational systems to the Depression was discernible at an early date. In a series of steps, school systems tended to: call for a longer period of education by requiring a college degree rather than a normal school education; fire married women, particularly those whose
husbands were considered able to support them and/or require longer maternity leaves; make license exams harder and pass a smaller percentage; cut pay; fire teachers.74

Because of the total number of teachers who were fired, their plight was the first among professionals to receive special attention from the New Deal. FERA instituted a special emergency education program to give work to qualified teachers on the relief rolls. This program in March, 1935, employed more than 44,000 teachers.75 Considering the only heads of household and those who could pass a means test were generally certified for relief, this number is significant. The married female teachers who bore the brunt of early Depression layoffs were generally not counted in these statistics.

The Depression not only caused a crisis of the spirit but it also caused a crisis in the churches. This crisis was evident in deteriorating church buildings and in unemployment and deprivation in the ministry. Ministers first felt the crunch in reduced salaries and in food and fuel being provided for keep in lieu of salary.76 By late 1933 it was estimated that there were at least 20,000 unemployed ordained clergy and that this unemployment was not confined to the traditionally poorer Protestant churches.77 Many ministers by 1933 received such deep cuts in salary that they were forced to seek second jobs to feed their families. The Depression made the ministry another "overcrowded" profession.78

One profession which did not give the appearance of overcrowding during this period was social work. The demand for social workers constantly expanded and served as an alternate career for unemployed college graduates. The social worker in the early Depression period was not faced by unemployment but rather by a new set of problems. Squeezed between shrinking funds and vastly increased caseloads, social workers saw their professional standards eroded as casework was forgotten and untrained workers were hired to relieve their excessive burdens.79 They were also faced with constantly shifting programs to administer and had to cope with a personal feeling of hopelessness about the future which was almost inevitable for those on the battleline of intense social misery. At the same time the status of social work was improving as social workers were called upon to contribute to policy decisions and to help draft legislation.80 During the New Deal the employability, influence, and status of social workers continued to rise. The social work profession proved to be not only an exception in terms of increasing job opportunities but also in terms of providing continued occupational opportunities for women.

What is known about professional unemployment and underemploy-
ment during the early Depression period is still outweighed by what is unknown. The available statistics are fragmentary, primarily local, and too disaggregated to understand the phenomena over time. This study is only a first fragment of a larger and more detailed map that should be drawn of a strategic area. This more definitive map will not be easy to draw because much of the material needed to construct it in all its contours either was never collected or has disappeared over time. Most of the professional organizations which should be the most logical sources for information of this type either in this period did not have the resources to collect raw data on employment in their profession or have subsequently lost or disposed of the data. Most governmental data is insufficiently refined to chart this area of unemployment. The phenomena of underemployment and functional underutilization that play such a vital part in the response of professionals to economic hardship are particularly resistant to statistical analysis.

Only a sketch map of professional unemployment and underemployment during the early Thirties can be drawn at this time. The outstanding feature on this map is mountainous difficulty faced by young people trying to gain full entry into their chosen profession. The leaders of the medical profession tried to stop them before they entered the door of medical school. The academic profession ceased to care about their fate once the young Ph.D’s had as graduate students helped to secure the jobs of their older colleagues. The legal and accounting professions tended to erect walls at the point of professional certification. Only the architects and engineers, at least in this early period, did not erect barriers against the young. Many professions regarded restriction in entry as vital to their economic survival and to a degree this perception was correct. Only when the competition of the young was not eliminated did established firms have to join in the struggle for survival. This was true in New York’s large legal and architectural firms burdened by high overhead costs. In many cases an established reputation in a restricted profession was the best protection against severe economic stress.

As John Garraty noted in *Unemployment in History*, professionals “were not different from assembly-line workers and craftsmen in unions. They used every means at their command to protect themselves, without regard for unemployed colleagues, present or future, domestic or foreign. In most countries doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other professionals sought to restrict entry into universities, to stiffen examinations, to discriminate against women, especially married women, and to obtain stronger legal protection for professional titles of all sorts.”

As this analysis has demonstrated, all of these things were as true for the
United States as they were for other countries. The interesting point to observe is that in the United States, despite attempts to restrict entry, the percentage of professional workers in the economy continued to rise during the decade. Professionals increased from 6.8 per cent of employed workers in 1930 to 7.5 per cent in 1940. Only the percentage of females in this category declined. It fell from 13.8 per cent in 1930 to 12.8 per cent in 1940.82 The forces of urbanization, technical development, and rising social aspiration responsible for a constantly increasing number of professionals in this century did not cease to operate during the Depression.

While attempts to restrict entry were a prominent feature in the topology of professional life in the Great Depression, one should not focus on them to the exclusion of equally salient points. What should be equally evident is that, despite these efforts, professionals along with other occupational groups suffered a significant rate of unemployment and economic and social dislocation. The fact that they were often longer shielded from unemployment and, at least initially, had more extensive economic resources should not blind us to the fact that: "Poverty is a heartless taskmaker for all people, but particularly for those intelligent enough to realize that forces beyond their control have denied society the valuable services they are equipped to render."83 That fact may be the challenge of the future.

NOTES


2. As classified by the Bureau of the Census, professional and technical workers comprised only 4.3% of the economically active civilian population in 1900 but were 14.8% in 1970. Bureau of Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States (100th ed.; Washington, D.C., 1979), p. 416.

3. According to Kotschnig the unemployed intellectuals not only helped bring the Party to power but spawned one of the reasons for the persecution of the Jews: "In Germany the 40,000-50,000 workless university graduates in 1931–3 became, together with the unemployed subalterns of the old imperial army, the spear-head of the national-socialist
movement... Hitler... promised to remove the Jews from those positions in government, in the professions, in business, which according to him rightfully belonged to thousands of Germany university graduates who could not find work." The unemployed professionals who were employed when Jews were dismissed from the universities and barred from the independent professions were among the first Germans to benefit from Hitler's rule. Kotschnig, p. 174, pp. 118–120.

4. Mannheim quoted in Kotschnig, p. 177. "The real importance of this overcrowding [in the professions] does not lie only in the depreciation of the intellectual careers, but in the depreciation in the public mind of the intellect [Geist] itself. The layman thinks that the intellect is held in honor because of its inherent merits. Yet it is a sociological law that the social value of the intellect is determined by the social position of those who are its protagonists... The most essentially negative effect of this [intellectual] unemployment consists in the destruction of what one might call 'planning for life.' Such planning is a very important element of the rationalization of man, as more than anything else it keeps the individual from yielding to momentary impulses [Momentreaktionen]. Its destruction increases to an extraordinary degree the suggestibility of the individual and strengthens the belief in miraculous cure-alls."


6. Freeman, p. 28.


11. The difficulties involved in working with the employment data for the Thirties have been outlined by both Garraty and Mitchell. They include the lack of employment insurance data, the unreliability of the data acquired from the census due to the static nature of the reported data, the distortions produced by the social attitudes of both the enumerators and respondents, and by the problems involved in defining 'unemployment': i.e. Should a teenager who has never worked be counted as unemployed if he is actively seeking work? The probability of gross error in even the most systematic national enumeration of the unemployed, the 1937 employment census, is so great as to discourage purely quantitative studies. Garraty, pp. 167–70. Mitchell, pp. 91–99.


13. Taking the pauper's oath was mandatory in Pennsylvania and seems to have been
customary everywhere before getting relief or being employed in a work program. Report of the Executive Director of the State Emergency Relief Board of Pennsylvania, Employment Relief in Pennsylvania: Sept. 1, 1932–Oct. 31, 1933. (Harrisburg, 1933), p. 4. In New York in 1930 Harry Hopkins was severely criticized for his administration of $75,000 in Red Cross funds used to employ men in New York City parks because he did not insist on full investigations of the applicants’ financial resources, those of his family, and all of the other multitude of qualifications for receiving relief. Henry H. Adams, Harry Hopkins: A Biography (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1977), pp. 43–4.


17. Relief officials in the Depression were plagued by a bricks-and-mortar approach to work relief spending as well as being hindered by public attitudes which still demanded a “work test” from relief applicants. Breaking rocks on a road gang was generally considered proper work for relief applicants while professional work was not.


19. Freeman, p. 10.


24. The unemployment rate for both cities was approximately the same in 1935 and was only exceeded by Pittsburgh and Cleveland among the nation’s ten largest cities. Philadelphia Labor Market studies, Pt. 3, p. 14.


26. Ibid.


30. Ibid.


33. Mitchell, p. 97. If anything Mitchell's figures underestimate the total per cent of unemployed engineers. Figures collected by the Professional Engineers' Committee on Unemployment for the Metropolitan District of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut which represented the Societies of Civil, Electrical, Mechanical and Mining and Metallurgical Engineers seem to indicate that in the Mid Atlantic states the number may have been higher. These societies had 12,000 members in 1928 and had registered 4,525 unemployed engineers who were approaching destitution by 1933. About half of these engineers were officially members of smaller societies. The engineers' committee were able to place only 368 of these men in engineering positions. W. A. Shoudy, "The Engineer and the Depression," The Nation 137 (September 13, 1933), p. 296.


35. Shoudy, p. 296.


37. Shoudy, p. 298.


39. These WPA openings were not relief jobs, but rather among the small percentage of openings that could be filled by people who did not qualify for relief.

40. Workers on Relief, p. 16.

41. Kotschnig, p. 152.


44. Ibid., November 21, 1935, p. 25, and December 5, 1935, p. 28.

45. Workers on Relief, p. 16.

46. Christine Scriabine, History of the Montgomery Bar Association, to be published, Montgomery Bar Association, Norristown, Pa. One young lawyer who was Jewish, a Democrat, and a member of the Philadelphia Bar was denied entrance every year from 1935 to 1941 despite the fact that he was a resident of the county, the Receiver for Closed Banks in the county and became solicitor for one of the Democratically controlled boroughs in the county in 1938. Because he was not admitted, he couldn't appear in court or file papers. These functions had to be handled by another lawyer.

47. Notes from the February 24, 1933, meeting of the Montgomery Bar Association Montgomery Bar Association, Norristown, Pa.

48. The perception of the established members of the Montgomery Bar that economic decline could lead to increased delinquency among lawyers was based on logic and reality. The number of disciplinary actions brought by the First Department, New York, increased from fifteen in 1928 to twenty-nine in 1931. It is believed that disciplinary actions represent only the tip of the iceberg as far as lawyer delinquencies are concerned. James P. Gifford, "Lawyers and the Depression," The Nation 137 (August 30, 1933), p. 238.

49. The concept of business careers as a safety valve for professional overcrowding is
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50. The number of new cases in a trial term of the Supreme Court of New York County increased from 4,407 in 1928 to 7,486 in 1932. The cases in Municipal Court in New York increased from 406,948 in 1928 to 498,685 in 1932. Ibid, p. 237.

51. This figure was typical for major American cities. The percentage increase in Philadelphia was higher. Ibid., p. 238. This increased use along with attendant increased costs were a factor in the city's decision to drop the Bureau of Legal Aid from its budget in 1933. It was replaced by a Legal Aid Society sponsored by the Bar Association and charities. Temple University Library Urban Archives, Legal Aid Society Records.

52. The Montgomery County Bar Association started to provide legal-aid in 1937.


54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., p. 119.


58. Ibid., p. 23.


60. Committee Y, p. 51.

61. Ibid., pp. 117, 494-5.


63. The number of Ph.D's granted rose from 1,276 in 1930-1 to 1,616 in 1934-5, an increase of 26.6%. Committee Y., p. 269.

64. Ibid., p. 32.

65. Ibid., p. 33.


69. Avis D. Carlson, "Deflating the Schools," Harpers CLXVIII (November 1933), p. 70.

70. Eunice Langdon, "The Teacher Faces the Depression," The Nation 137 (August 16, 1933), p. 182.


72. Langdon, p. 183.

73. Ibid., p. 184.

74. New York Times, June 23, 1931, p. 2; July 4, 1931, p. 4; March 10, 1931, p. 27; April 8, 1931, p. 1; May 13, 1931, p. 3; June 27, 1931, p. 17.
82. Wolfbein, pp. 198–9.