The Militant Politics of Poverty Policy:
Flight, Fight, Policy, and Rights

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Introduction

Examining the modern American welfare state involves reading the great public policy experts that have transformed structures and theories. Francis Fox Piven and Richard Andrew Cloward have been active theorists and political activists since the 1960s, and through their works on civil unrest and policy concession, they have developed a strategy by which the poor can have a voice. Michael Harrington's work, *The Other America; Poverty in the United States,* exposed a hidden America to the Kennedy Administration and general public that most scholars agree brought the issue of poverty in the United States to center stage in the early 1960s. Former senator from New York, Daniel Patrick Moynihan's work, *Family and Nation*, examined the crisis that is the breakdown of the family unit in poor urban communities and explained HOW public policy incentivized illegitimacy, non-marriage, and cohabitation. Lawrence Mead laid the theoretical framework for the welfare reforms of the 1990's through *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship* (1986) and *The New Politics of Poverty: The Nonworking Poor in America* (1993).

Other scholars, like the author of *Losing Ground: American Social Policy; 1950-1980* (1984) Charles Murray, argued that the battle against poverty was being lost because the poor were becoming dependent and unemployment, a generational lifestyle. Gilbert Y. Steiner, fellow at the Brookings Institute and author of several works including, *The Futility of Family Policy* (1981), *Social Insecurity*; *the Politics of Welfare* (1966), and *The State of Welfare* (1971), argued that public policy commonly has negative unforeseen outcomes, and the modern American welfare state has been an institution of political coercion, while wrongly incentivizing bad behavior in poor

communities. Lastly, William Julius Wilson, former President of the American Sociological Association and writer of well-known books and articles including *More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City* (2009) and *When Work Disappears* (2013), explains that racism is not the major issue that keeps the urban poor in poverty, though he insists that it is still an issue; rather, chronic unemployment is what perpetuates poverty.

Although poverty is a worldwide problem, in the United States, poverty has profoundly different characteristics than it does elsewhere in the world. As Michael Harrington puts it, "Poverty [in the U.S.] is off the beaten track…is hidden today in a way that it never was before" (Harrington, 3). The poor are not visibly among us. The rise of white flight and the mass migration of whites into the suburbs left many Americans unlikely to see poor people each day. "When the suburbanite does come into contact with the poor community he decides that, "those people" are truly fortunate to be living the way they are and that they are lucky to be exempt from the strains and tensions of the middle class" (Harrington, 3). Poverty in the U.S. is often characterized, by many in the middle class, as either earned due to some moral or character flaw or as a noble and blessed condition void of the stresses that plague the middle class.

The 'poor' include a large and diverse population in the U. S. As Harrington describes the poor, they are the, "unskilled workers, the migrant farm workers, the aged, the minorities, and all the others who live in the economic underworld of American life [those] … unknown to suburbia" (Harrington, 2). To discuss in depth the plight of the poor could mean spending a lifetime trying to understand the differences among the groups. The purpose of this paper is rather to examine the political, economic, and social

lives of a group that has a history of poverty with roots back to the 1700's when it was forcibly brought to the American continent: the black poor. Poor blacks are the main focus of American public opinion regarding the welfare state and are viewed by many as its main recipients. In 1960, Harrington could write that the public believed "the Negro is poor because he is black; that is obvious enough. But, perhaps more importantly, the Negro is black because he is poor" (Harrington, 72). Harrington wrote that "America more or less expects the Negro to be poor. There is no emotional shock…[because] the mind and the feelings, even of good-willed individuals, are so suffused with an unconscious racism that misery is overlooked" (Harrington, 27).

The main focus of this paper is on black poverty and public policy from the Great Depression up to the early 1970's. This crucial time period saw a mass migration of blacks from the Jim Crow South to the North as agricultural industrialization replaced the black work force in the South. The surprise came when blacks ventured to the northern cities and found that the expectations of the 'sympathetic' northerner was that they not interfere with work for the whites and keep themselves separate from the greater white population. Southern lynchings were replaced with Northern separation and poverty. This paper examines the living conditions in the city slums and ghettos and how those living conditions created revolutionary sentiment in the black population. Furthermore, historical analysis yields a political theory of welfare benefits as political concessions brought about by civil unrest in poor black communities, as argued by Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward in *The Politics of Turmoil*.

Piven and Cloward argue that violence and protest can be used by a disenfranchised minority to gain political rights. The urban, black, welfare rights

movement can usefully be compared to the white Appalachian movement for welfare rights. Comparative analysis of the two movements yields this conclusion: blacks in the city were more able to gain political concessions because, though their living conditions were equally inhumane, if not more so, they were not as powerless as most Appalachian communities.

Finally, black poverty in the U.S. is examined through a Christian lens. That perspective is compared to historical and modern American public opinion, which helps us understand the disconnect between reality in the welfare state and public opinion. The paper concludes with suggestions by several public policy scholars of ways to fix the major problems of unemployment, female-headed households, crime, and poor education in the ghetto. These efforts seek to address the causes of poverty–both within the poor urban black community and elsewhere–rather than simply relieve its symptoms.

PART ONE:

THE POVERTY TRADITION: A HISTORY FILLED WITH CONTROL AND APATHY

I. Western Poor Laws and Poverty Theory

The United States inherited much of its public policy regarding the poor from European legislation. Poverty in Europe has a long history, but for the purpose of this paper only a brief outline of that history is needed. Arguably, the single most significant law created to address the problem of poverty in Europe was the English Poor Law. The Poor Laws, many established by Queen Elizabeth I, established the appropriate ways of dealing with the English Poor, who were a growing class because of changes in the socioeconomic feudal system and increasing bad health. As one expert in 14th century English history explains, "[T]he development of the English Poor Laws [was brought about by the] growth of industry and movement of labour, as well as the separation of men from the land result[ing] in an army of beggars" (Hudson and Coukos quoting Jennings, 12).

Historically, the English differentiated between the 'undeserving' and 'deserving' poor. The undeserving poor were those who were believed to be poor because they lacked the moral character to overcome laziness and drunkenness. The deserving poor were those who were otherwise honest hardworking persons, but because of some outside force unknown and uncontrollable to them they were temporarily unable to work; or, they were persons physically unable to work, such as the infirm and the elderly. The 'deserving' poor would receive welfare with few requirements for maintaining benefits, except the requirement not to beg publically. However, "[I]n England, the same statute of 1572 that established taxation as the method for financing poor relief charged the overseers of the poor with putting vagrants to work" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 24). The 'undeserving poor' were given two alternatives: work or starve. As one scholar notes, "In

1523, Luther published a detailed relief scheme for Leisnig, in Saxony, which prohibited begging and provided for a common chest to aid the old, the weak, and those poor householders who has 'honourably labored at their craft or in agriculture' but who could no longer find the means to support themselves" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 9).

The struggle of determining who 'deserves' financial aid while at the same time preventing dependency has been a problem for all societies that initiated programs and institutions to aid the poor. As the former head of AmeriCorps, Leslie Lenkowsky notes, "[F]rom the time of the Elizabethan Poor Law 1601, 'those concerned with social policy have wrestled with a troubling dilemma: how to aid the poor without encouraging lasting financial dependency'" (Moynihan, 127). Daniel Patrick Moynihan, explains, "[W]hereas some people are the deserving poor--the involuntary unemployed and the helpless, as the Poor Law categorized them--others are the undeserving poor–the 'vagrant'–taking advantage of the community's generosity" (Murray, 16). The challenge for the European states that chose to provide for the poor was to prevent the generosity of the state from becoming a substitute for hard work.

Welfare policy in England during the 14th through mid-19th centuries included requirements that the city fathers and/or local magistrates oversee the poor because they, like children incapable of taking care of themselves, should be supervised. Piven and Cloward note, "The Elizabethan Poor Laws established a local tax, known as the poor rate, as the means for financing the care of paupers and required that justices of the peace serve as overseers of the poor" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 16). The magistrates could be held accountable if the rate of 'paupers' in the community rose above a certain level.

Different countries attacked the problem of pauperism and poverty differently. For example, Lyon, France, established a welfare system in 1535 that provided free medical coverage for the poor as well as money and food vouchers (Piven and Cloward 1971, 11). Other cities like Hamburg, Germany, saw poverty as a self-perpetuating problem, and in the 1790s "the town of Hamburg initiated a public works program" which was established to "reduce the support lower than what any industrious man or woman could earn" to prevent dependency (Piven and Cloward 1971, 25). In England during the late 18th century "the poor rate was over six times as high as it had been in 1760" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 21). As the rate of people on the dole increased drastically, states and cities began to make requirements for acceptance onto the dole stricter in order to prevent the continual growth of welfare and pauperism (Piven and Cloward 1971, 21). The English poor did not willingly acquiesce to being thrown off the dole, and in "the last decade of the eighteenth century, when hardship was made more acute by a succession of poor harvests, there were widespread food riots" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 19).

"Western relief systems," which originated in "the mass disturbances that erupted during the long transition from feudalism to capitalism beginning in the sixteenth century" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 8) were suddenly reformed as the aristocracy and policy makers became more convinced by the increasing number of people on the doles that, as French Aristocrat Alexis Tocqueville said upon leaving Europe and arriving in the United States in 1831, "any measure which establishes legal charity on a permanent basis and gives an administrative form thereby creates an idle and lazy class" (Moynihan quoting Seymour Drescher's translation of Tocqueville's *Memoir on Pauperism*, 127).

Europeans began seeing their welfare systems as perpetuating poverty and did not view the increase in the dole as being a sign of a collapsing European economy caused by the transition from feudalism to capitalism. To them, the economy had not worsened, but the poor were just lazier and more dependent.

As the welfare story progressed, it traveled across the Atlantic to America where the role of government in relation to the citizenry, including the numerous poor, had not been tested over 400 years, as it had by the poor laws in England. Americans had concluded that European welfare policy created dependence, not a decrease in poverty, which was, furthermore, the likely outcome of welfare programs. However, as the United States transitioned from stronger states' rights to a stronger federal government in the mid-20th century, it "saw the last years of a consensus about the purpose of welfare… its roots in the Poor Laws of Elizabethan England" shift from the community provision for the poor to provision by the federal government (Murray, 16). Growing opinion indicated that the federal government was most able to provide for the poor, and the local communities in which the poor lived were not suited in a growing national economy to prevent poverty and provide for the poor during a nation-wide economic crisis.

In the United States "the concept of the general welfare state was primarily in the discussion stage in the years preceding 1901. It was largely owing to the Progressive Movement, the New Deal and the Fair Deal of the twentieth century that theory was translated into practice and that the concept of the general welfare state was embodied in legislation" (Fine, 378). In the past, local communities in both Europe and America were responsible for their poor and were expected to maintain them with little help from the wider government (e.g, monarch, national capital). The "public chest" common in

medieval Europe became a thing of the past, and in the U. S., “whereas government held 7 per cent of the nation’s capital assets in 1900, it held 20 per cent of such assets in 1950. Twelve per cent of the nation’s labor force was employed by government in 1950 as compared to 4 per cent in 1900” (Fine, 378). The role of government in the lives of individual citizens had changed dramatically.

II. American Poverty: A Comparative View

In developing nations "poverty is so general and so extreme that it is the passion of the entire society to obliterate it…. There is a gigantic mobilization of the spirit of the society: aspiration becomes a national purpose that penetrates to every village and motivates a historic transformation" (Harrington, 158). While the United States, "continues to be the wealthiest country, it has the highest proportion of people living in poverty among developed nations" (Lipset, 75-76). American poverty is different from poverty elsewhere in the world because the divide between the middle class and lower class is greater elsewhere and the lower class in highly fragmented rather than a single united group. Several sources including "poverty estimates from the Luxembourg Income Studies, which uses the economic distance approach, measuring poverty as 'a fraction of the median equivalent disposable income,' also find the United States has the highest rate, twice the average for all developed countries" (Lipset, 73).

Many scholars assert that the United States lags behind other developed nations, not only in decreasing poverty rates, but also in providing diverse programs to help the poor. As Moynihan puts it, [M]ost of the industrial democracies of the world [in 1970] adopted a wide range of social programs designed specifically to support the stability and viability of the family" (Moynihan, 5). Mead explains that "the United States spent only 16 percent of its gross domestic product on public social expenditures in 2005, compared to an average of 21 percent for all these [developed] countries. Sweden and France each spent 29 percent" (Mead, 23). Perhaps the 5 percent difference between the U.S. and European nations can be explained through "the World Values Survey conducted in 1980 and 1990 [which] found that when asked to choose between the importance of 'equality

of income or the freedom to live and develop without hindrance,' Americans are more disposed to the latter by 71 percent compared to an average of 59 percent in Europe in 1990" (Lipset, 72). Americans advocate for equal opportunity but are slow to favor equal outcomes.

While Americans lag behind Europe in spending for the welfare system, they may make up for it in private giving. Americans are generous and "even though the American state now provides more fully for many activities once almost totally dependent on private support, its population, as the most anti-statist people in the developed world, continue to be the most generous on a personal basis" (Lipset, 71). Harrington, writing before the vast expansion and addition of crucial welfare programs during the 1960s explains that, as generous as Americans are, "this country is [still] caught in a paradox. Because poverty does not appear to be deadly, because so many are enjoying a decent standard of life, there is indifference and blindness to the plight of the poor" (Harrington, 159).

When a person becomes poor "…suddenly they feel themselves to be rejects, outcasts. At that moment, the affluent society ceases to be a reality or even a hope; it becomes a taunt" (Harrington, 29-30). So this affluent society breaks the hope of those who exist in its underclass by presenting itself as an impossible dream. The unfortunate truth remains that, compared to much of the underdeveloped or undeveloped world, the United States "at precisely that moment in history [1962] where for the first time a people have the material ability to end poverty, they lack the will to do so" (Harrington, 159).

The United States is not different from the rest of the developed world in its apathy towards poverty. But that commonality does not excuse the continuation of sub–par provision for the poor, and "until these facts shame us, until they stir us to action, the other America will continue to exist, a monstrous example of needless suffering in the most advanced society in the world" (Harrington, 191). If only the most generous nation in the world would create policy that considers the whole person in poverty, the United States might free the poor from the culture that perpetuates poverty. But, for public policy to change, the political incentives for a change must be present, or at least public opinion must call for such changes. Presently, most public opinion regarding the welfare state opposes expanding the welfare state, strengthening the safety net, and increasing funds allocated for welfare-related programs. There is little passion in the larger middle class to end poverty in the United States and if Harrington's prophetic voice holds true today, then "[I]f the word [poverty] does not grate upon the ears of gentile America, there must be a passion to end poverty, for nothing less than that will do" (Harrington, 159).

III. Public Opinion of the Poor

American public opinion toward the poor is at least uninformed and possibly misinformed. As John Kenneth Galbraith wrote, "People are poverty-stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls markedly behind that of the community. Then they cannot have what the larger community regards as the minimum necessary for decency; and they cannot wholly escape, therefore, the judgment of the larger community that they are indecent" (Galbraith, 323-24). Upon seeing a person begging on the street, many Americans might conclude that the poor are unclean. Furthermore, after concluding they are dirty, one might go only a little further and assert that, if they are dirty, then they must want to be dirty. The poor are "indecent" because they want to be indecent. These conclusions are not products of human nature; rather they are shaped by American culture. As Piven and Cloward explain, "[T]he loathing of 'reliefers' is not an accidental feature of American culture. It has deep roots in the two main tenets of market ideology: the economic system is open, and economic success is a matter of individual merit…. [T]hose who fail–the very poor–are therefore morally or personally defective" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 148).

The truth Harrington expressed, that "the majority of the poor in America are white…" (Harrington, 190), is still true today, and yet to a majority of white Americans welfare is a black problem (Cloward and Piven 1975, 141). Kenneth Hudson and Andrea Coukos note, "By the 1960s, the popular image [among white Americans] of the typical welfare recipient was that of the 'welfare queen'–a black woman who never works, who lives on welfare for years, and has multiple 'illegitimate' children in order to get it" (Hudson and Coukos, 19). However, Hudson and Coukos go further to explain that the

reality is “the demography of the welfare population has little effect on this stereotype–most welfare recipients are white (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003:358), have small families (Dye, 2001:2), and receive welfare for a limited amount of time” (Hudson and Coukos, 20). Even though most welfare recipients are not black, nor in female-headed households with 10 children, the popular stereotype in American public opinion survives. Piven and Cloward emphasize that “the dominant view of the poor [is that]…they are defective, morally as well as in other ways…” (Cloward and Piven 1975, 21).

Public opinion regarding welfare recipients is obviously incorrect, and yet national political leaders are unwilling to correct the stereotypes. Recently, before the welfare reforms under the Clinton Administration, a task force was established by the American Welfare Association to determine the probability of a political backlash if a major welfare reform occurred. The findings of the task force were remarkable, although not surprising: “though public opinion on welfare was based on misperceptions and stereotypes, it concluded that ‘public policies that fly in the face of widespread public beliefs will not succeed’ and that ‘welfare policy should reflect the value that society places on work, individual responsibility and family stability’” (Hudson and Coukos, 9). Simply put, the public is misinformed, but politicians heed the opinions of their constituents, drafting policy based on inaccurate information and hurtful stereotypes, in part because they desire to be elected for another term.

William Julius Wilson, professor of sociology at Harvard University, explains that incorrect information is not only accepted by the greater public but also by policy makers because for many years it was unpopular to research poor urban communities. He goes further and describes that “[F]or a period of several years [after Moynihan’s report on the

black family], the problems of social dislocation in the ghetto did not attract serious research attention. This left the study of ghetto social dislocation to conservative analysts, who…put their own peculiar stamp on the problem, so much so that the dominant image of the underclass became one of people with serious character flaws" (Wilson 1989, 183). That research helped solidify a public opinion of welfare recipients that has yet to change, even after more accurate information and studies have been compiled and decades after the stereotype was established.

Some scholars argue, "White indignation at the morals of the welfare recipients and white guilt over who was responsible for putting them in that state collided" (Murray, 21). Though many contemporary Americans incorrectly think that the welfare recipient is typically black, Harrington's work helped reveal that "poverty, in the terms of that [1960 presidential] campaign, [was] something that happened mostly in Appalachia…" (Murray, 27). In the United States poverty was not historically considered a "black" problem by white Americans. As Gilbert Y. Steiner notes, "[T]he popular image of the chief beneficiaries has changed from that of old, respectable, white people to that of young, immoral, Negro men and women" (Steiner 1966, 7).

Though the description of the welfare recipient is formed from ignorance, it is also formed from racism. Murray explains that to "listen carefully to popular wisdom is also to hear a good deal of mean-spirited (often racist) invective" (Murray, 146). In the United States, it is difficult to separate poverty from race in the minds of most Americans, and if poor people are "'shuffling,' 'lazy,' and 'uppity,'" so are blacks because they are synonymous (Hudson and Coukos, 15). Wilson defines racism as a belief that a race is either biologically or culturally inferior to another, and those beliefs

legitimize persons who prescribe a way that the "inferior" race 'should' be treated in society (Wilson 2009, 15). Furthermore, several scholars have suggested that the economic system present in the U.S. is a kind of "laissez faire racism" in which blacks are believed to deserve their poverty (Wilson 2009, 15). Wilson argues that, if poverty in the U.S. is going to end, entire social structures and cultures have to change and move away from their imbedded racist foundations (Wilson 2009, 154). Those structures are complex and regularly react to or create racism in the United States. Even if the greater public were more informed about issues of poverty in the United States, Martin Luther King Jr. warned:

> As public awareness increases there will be dangers and opportunities. The opportunity will be to deal fully rather than haphazardly with the problem as a whole… The danger will be that the problems will be attributed to innate Negro weaknesses and used to justify neglect and rationalize oppression (Rainwater and Yancey quoting Martin Luther King Jr., 404).

In many ways King's words ring as prophetic calls to justice in the modern welfare state of the 21st century.

Often the general public has just enough information to develop uninformed notions and to justify bigoted opinions. The fact that in the city the welfare rolls are disproportionally black polarizes poor blacks and poor whites, one against the other (Cloward and Piven 1975, 143). It is important to realize that some policies that seem to be combating segregation and bigotry can perpetuate that same bigotry. It is one thing to

say that white communities have encouraged a lack of motivation and pride among black urban dwellers, and it is another thing to say that a black child cannot find pride unless surrounded by white children in a classroom (Cloward and Piven 1975, 225). Well-meaning policymakers can do more harm than good. The statement of one housewife testifying before the "U.S. Commission on Civil Rights [said] of the welfare department's 'domestic service training programs' that 'it seems rather unnecessary for a Negro to go to school to get a certificate to clean up someone else's house'" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 129).

In the end, if a person is only allowed to clean a house and that person should not and cannot expect to do anything else it does not seem obvious why that person should be educated. A person should not be stereotyped by their economic status or racial background, and yet for the black person living in the ghetto he or she is stereotyped because of both. As Nathan Glazer explained, "[E]ither we must undertake the same struggle against the racism of the white ethnic groups that was undertaken in the South, or we must accept a divided unequal society" (Glazer, 169). It seems that many Americans prefer the segregated ghetto and slum for the blacks rather than challenging the racism prevalent in northern society and in public policy.

IV. American Poverty and Policy Theory

Political theory regarding the welfare state is extremely complex and involves differing schools of thought, which view welfare in either 'rights' or 'charity' language. Different groups value work-requirements differently and disagree on whether the social behaviors of the poor should be regulated. There is major disagreement as to whether the government should provide equal opportunity for the poor or whether equality demands restricting inequality in outcomes. As President Johnson noted at the beginning of the War on Poverty:

> Freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, do as you desire, chose the leaders you please…, it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through the gates… (Moynihan, 31).

Some policymakers emphasize a culture of poverty, while others emphasize the breakdown of the family unit as perpetuating poverty. Some assert that the 'safety net' established through the public policy of the Great Depression era does not catch enough people, while others believe it should be decreased in size and the distance the person can fall before being caught, by the net, should be increased. With much disagreement on many issues, navigating through political theory regarding the welfare state can be strenuous and time consuming.

The Great Depression helped lead to the creation of the "safety net." Safety net theory argues that there should be a basic level of living that all Americans should never

fall beneath. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt thought "that the nation had come to accept a 'second Bill of Rights,' which established 'a new basis of security and prosperity" (Fine, 398). Among these rights, Roosevelt included:

> The right to a useful and remunerative job, the right of the individual to earn enough to provide adequate food, clothing, and recreation… the right of every family to a decent home, the right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health, the right to adequate protection against the fear of old age, sickness, accidents, and unemployment, and the right to a good education (Fine, 398).

Others, since the creation of the safety net have explained that its purpose was to "provide enough of a benefit so that clients are not half housed, half clothed, or half fed" (Steiner 1971, 337). Harrington explains, "Poverty should be defined in terms of those who are denied the minimal levels of health, housing, food, and education that our present stage of scientific knowledge specifies as necessary for life as it is now lived in the United States" (Harrington, 179).

The safety net was supposed to prevent Americans from falling into poverty; however, as Harrington observes, decades after the Great Depression "there existed another America.… [I]t dwelt between 40,000,000 and 50,000,000 citizens of this land. They were poor. They still are" (Harrington, 1). Some speculate that one reason the safety net did not catch everyone was because welfare was not legally declared a right. A serf class is created by the system of welfare we have now (Cloward and Piven 1975, 116). If we begin to describe welfare as a 'right,' this could change (Cloward and Piven

1975, 116). Karen Tani explains that, though welfare was not publically portrayed as a 'right,' among those who addressed claimants and recipients the 'rights language' was regularly used. She explains that "to speak in terms of rights, in other words, was not just a way of characterizing something as important or sacred; it was a way of seeking government protection and intervention without assuming the posture of the supplicant, the slave, the ward" (Tani, 360). When a recipient spoke of his or her benefits as rights, their dignity was reestablished, because in the United States the language of 'rights' has a positive connotation.

Of course others, like Lawrence Mead, argue that according to "the position of entitlement…. the needy have a right to more income and services simply because they are worse off than average. In American politics, when a group seems to lack benefits or opportunities that other people have, demands are made for redress" (Mead, 51). Mead reasons that Americans distrust, and politically act against, those who claim a right that others cannot claim. Not every person is granted welfare of the type being discussed in this paper (like the wealthy), and so those who are granted a right (the poor) that others cannot receive are looked down upon, according to Mead. Mead overlooks that accepting charity is also humiliating and, not only creates negative stereotypes for the recipient held by the non-recipients, but also perpetuates low self-esteem and self-worth. This continual self-degradation is often referred to by political theorists and sociologists as a 'culture of poverty.'

There is debate over whether a culture of poverty exists, but most scholars agree that it does exist and perpetuates poverty in many communities and especially in black ghetto communities. Mead explains that when "sociologists in the 1960s spoke of a

culture of poverty, [they defined it as] a defeated mindset where poor adults believe in work, marriage, and other mainstream values, but they commonly have given up living by them" (Mead, 43). As Harrington further explains, when the non-poor see the poor they see "in short, a language of the poor, a psychology of the poor, and a world view of the poor" (Harrington, 17). Opinions from those outside looking into the poor communities can often encourage those within the community to fit the stereotypes others construct about them. Many theorists, including Galbraith, argue that "the first and strategic step in an attack on poverty is to see that it is no longer self-perpetuating" (Galbraith, 330). In black ghetto community a new poverty is revealed in which the culture of poverty is even more prevalent because it "is construed to destroy aspiration; it is a system designed to be impervious to hope, it is populated by failures, by those driven from the land and bewildered by the city, by old people suddenly confronted with the torments of loneliness and poverty, and by minorities facing a wall of prejudice" (Harrington, 10). The culture of poverty is strengthened by the increasing powerlessness of the poor.

Piven defines power, as most political theorists do, as "the ability of an actor to sway the actions of another actor or actors, even against resistance" (Piven and Cloward 2008, 3). Unlike the poor laborer, the urban poor have very little power because they cannot shut down the economy, as unions can when they use their collective power to strike (Cloward and Piven 1975, 120). The power of the state, which some scholars argue is related to "the degree to which it can exert power over citizens," is enough to suppress what little power the poor may possess because of their numbers (Taydas and Peksen, 274). As Piven and Cloward further argue, in the history of American political science

political scientists “have begun with the assumption that there are in fact two systems of power, one based on wealth and one based on votes…,” and while the poor in their small communities have the votes to exert power in the greater surrounding community their power is muted because they become a minority and they have no wealth (Piven and Cloward 1977, 2).

As Mead suggests, “people feel overwhelmed by problems over which they feel they have no control” (Mead, 44) but “those who control the means of physical coercion, and those who control the means of producing wealth, have power over those who do not” (Piven and Cloward 1977, 1). Sadly, Isaac and Kelly confirm that “the well-being of powerless groups has never been the primary focus of welfare policy in capitalist society; instead, its primary focus has been to regulate the threat which large numbers of relatively powerless people may be capable of generating under certain historical conditions” (Isaac and Kelly, 1378). “Political power is the ability to control actions of the body politic…,” and it is that body whose behavior the welfare state desires to control (Cloward and Piven 1975, 73).

Commonly accepted in political science is what Murray’s proposition: “Status and money are the most influential rewards that society uses to manage behavior” (Murray, 178). Even though “America has a self-image of itself as a nation of joiners and doers…, yet this entire structure is a phenomenon of the middle class” (Harrington, 133). Still the middle class and public policymakers insist that the welfare recipient conform to the behavioral norms established by larger community. American family policy in the welfare state is a good example of the state structuring welfare payments along what that larger community believes are specific and appropriate family and behavioral criteria and

norms. In an attempt to maintain the family unit, Congress established *Aid to Families with Dependent Children* (AFDC). These benefits were supposed to help keep the mother with her children and maintain the family unit when a husband died. Specific rules commonly referred to as "man in the house" rules forbade benefits from going to a mother who was married or cohabitating. In the end, although the government desired to keep the family together, it instead incentivized illegitimacy. Not only did the government attempt to force what it considered to be the 'family unit' on poorer communities, but it simultaneously rewarded unwise social behaviors such as illegitimacy and non-marriage.

When "family policy quickly became a fad in American social policy," it was "enthusiastically embraced without attention to the difficulties of developing, enacting, and implementing a public program" and through it the family unit, which could have been stronger social unit in poorer communities, became weaker (Steiner 1981, 193). At the same time that the debate over family policy took place, an argument raged between advocates of equal opportunity and equal outcome. The major disagreement between those advocating opportunity and outcome stemmed from one question: was if it is necessary to reverse a racist past that prohibited blacks from bettering themselves in the United States must the federal government provide equal opportunity for blacks or did it have to guarantee equal outcomes.

To the public, 'equal outcome' ran directly against the American 'hard work' ethic because it promised rewards that were not necessarily earned. As Murray explains, the "shift in assumptions" from 'equality of opportunity' to 'equality of outcome', occurred amongst the "intelligentsia" not the average member of the electorate (Murray,

42). Policymakers and the “intelligentsia” concluded that equal opportunity was irrelevant because years of discrimination, poor education, and inequality prevented equal opportunity from having any real effect, for the damage of bigotry had the effect of cementing poverty in certain communities. Simply put, a person could not make use of millions of dollars in a tied sack if they had no way of opening the sack.

Advocates of 'equal outcome’ suggest that assuring outcomes for poorer persons in communities could act as the stepping stones for entire communities on path that could eventually lead out of poverty. However, countering this argument, several scholars point out that upon the gates of the suburbs being opened to blacks after the Civil Rights Movement, the educated black leaders in the poorer communities who could have stayed and helped their communities slowly climb out of poverty simply left and moved to the suburbs. While opportunity established for blacks upon passage and enforcement of Civil Rights legislation legally provided equality, the economic crisis many blacks faced because of racial hatred and discrimination prevented them from participating in those opportunities. Liberals and conservatives disagreed on the role of government in providing aid and even though ‘equal opportunity’ is still the dominant theory present debate continues regarding its prominence in the future.

In the debate over poverty in the United States, conservatives tend to emphasize cultural factors and liberals tend to emphasize structural conditions as the factors keeping the poor in poverty (Wilson 2009, 23). In debating the other school of thought Moynihan explains that “‘liberals’ emphasize social policy but are criticized for ignoring values. ‘Conservatives’ emphasize values in the outcomes for children but seem threatened by the idea of social policy” (Moynihan, 188-89). However, though these groups think very

differently about the 'size' of government and the lens through which poverty should be viewed, very few politicians, with the exception of libertarians, are contesting the need for government to help the poor (Murray, 196). Mead explains that "traditionally, liberals have wanted government to do more about a range of domestic problems, not only poverty, while conservatives want it to be less" (Mead, 51).

The interesting point to be made is that at times when Americans want the government to do more, as in the Great Depression era or in the 1960s "'liberal' connoted a forward-looking, problem-solving, pragmatic, sleeves-rolled-up stance toward the world" (Murray, 22). At those times "politicians with national ambitions, Republicans and Democrats alike, all wanted 'liberal' to be associated with them as an adjective rather than as a noun" (Murray, 21). As Sidney Fine writes in her work describing the history of Americans' views on the proper role of government, in the mid-1950s Americans "would appear to have rejected the admonition that government is best which governs least and to have endorsed the view that in the interest of the general welfare the state should restrain the strong and protect the weak…and should provide the citizen with some degree of economic security" (Fine, 400). Strangely, during the reform era of the 1980s, those interested in furthering their political careers wanted to be thought of as conservative regarding the welfare state and the role of government.

The complexities of American political thought are intertwined with several schools of thought on issues ranging from the role of government to the ideal American family structure. These differing opinions create a very divisive policy environment, and the focus of policy debate becomes political ideology and not the poor themselves. While understanding the diversity of theoretical opinion of the subject is crucial to navigating

through the debates, understanding the diverse groups included in the larger category of ‘poor’ is equally crucial because each group has different needs, which are the result of different kinds of poverty.

PART TWO: TAKING IT BY FORCE:

A FRAMEWORK FOR DISEMPOWERED GROUPS TO SECURE POLITICAL CONCESSIONS

V. How to Force Political Concessions

What in political discourse is commonly referred to as the Cloward-Piven Strategy is in its simplest form a strategy that can be used by the poor to gain power even though they are in a state of powerlessness; they do so by using their numbers to force political concessions in the form of welfare rights. Another crucial but often unmentioned aspect of this strategy is for the poor to enter the welfare rolls *en masse*, bankrupting the system and creating a massive policy crisis, which could be used to initiate a minimum guaranteed federal income program which. According to Piven and Cloward, this would eliminate American poverty. Many scholars laid the theoretical groundwork for the creation of the Cloward-Piven Strategy, including Michael Harrington, who exclaimed, "As a result of this situation [American poverty], there is no realistic hope for the abolition of poverty in the United States until there is a vast social movement, a new period of political creativity" (Harrington, 172). Piven and Cloward agree that "there is information enough for action but all that is lacking is political will" (Harrington, 172), and they believe that political will can be forced to acquiesce in a way similar to how it was forced during the Civil Rights Movement when civil unrest made policymakers act quickly and adapt many unpopular policy changes.

One of the great outcomes of modernization in the developed world is that a high concentration of people can now live in a relatively smaller area than they could in the past because of food, waste, health, and safety needs. However, the result is that "civil disorder is far more costly and threatening in a highly organized and complex society, especially as urbanization and industrialization increase" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 39). It can take only a matter of minutes before a large crowd can assemble and even less time

for the crowd to stir into civil unrest. Modern democratic society has prepared for such outbursts, and "to minimize disturbances, an elaborate mechanism has evolved in capitalist societies…, namely, the universal franchise and the periodic election of political office holders. The votes of an enfranchised populace serve as a barometer of unrest…." (Piven and Cloward 1971, 40). When the public is unhappy they remove candidates from office and when they are happy they reelect officials for multiple terms. However, when the poor feel that the electoral system has failed them, they will resort to other means that could bring about the same end: better lives for themselves and their children.

In this urban case, blacks acted violently because they felt it was their last resort (Piven and Cloward 1971, 228). Although policy placates unrest among the poor and deflects any political articulation by the poor, civil unrest forces the power holders to concede otherwise withheld benefits (Cloward and Piven 1975, 25). Government welfare concessions are used to calm the disturbed poor (Cloward and Piven 1975, 51). Even though violence may be used to create a more lasting peace, in ideal situations, non-violent means are more beneficial as was evident during the Civil Rights Movement (Cloward and Piven 1975, 156). Unfortunately the Cloward-Piven Strategy acknowledges that the successes of the Civil Rights Movement may not be possible without some aggressively militant tactics; for, while the Civil Rights Movement had support eventually from much of the middle-class, the welfare rights movement has not gained that same support. As Cloward and Piven explain, "[A]dvocacy must be supplemented by organized demonstrations to create a climate of militancy that will overcome the

invidious and immobilizing attitudes [toward welfare recipients]'" (Piven and Cloward 2008, 277).

After 'demonstrations' have made the public aware of the unrest in the city, the second phase of the Cloward-Piven Strategy could be initiated. This would include an attack on "ignorance of welfare rights… through a massive educational campaign" (Piven and Cloward 2008, 276). Once the poor are made aware of their rights to receive financial aid through several welfare state programs, including AFDC, "in order to generate a crisis, the poor must obtain benefits which they have forfeited" (Piven and Cloward 2008, 276). Simply put, "the strategy [Cloward and Piven] propose, is a massive drive to recruit the poor onto the welfare rolls [which] would precipitate a profound financial and political crisis" (Piven and Cloward 2008, 272). As the financial crisis develops, it would be important, according to Piven and Cloward, "to use the mass media to inform the broader liberal community about the inefficiencies and injustices of welfare" (Piven and Cloward 2008, 277).

Steiner explains that, although "millions of welfare clients and other millions of potential welfare clients remain uninvolved in any organized movement to improve their circumstances," of the thousands that do become involved, "a vigorous and aggressive protest style [is implemented]…." (Steiner 1971, 280). If democracy is to prevail and grow in the United States, several scholars have argued that "without the promise of relief from hunger and privation, disorder would still be inevitable. The requirement is, of course, much more urgent in a world in which differing economic and political systems are in competition" (Galbraith, 353). Simply put, if democracy stands a chance against other forms of government, including socialism, the issue of poverty must be resolved.

The final step in the Cloward-Piven Strategy is for the legislature to draft public policy that would "lead to legislation for a guaranteed annual income and thus an end to poverty" (Piven and Cloward 2008, 272). Piven and Cloward explain that in communities of unrest "political leaders welcome the chance to deal with disaffected black spokesmen who will talk and who do not urge violence on their followers" (Steiner 1971, 280). This strategy would create a clear and permanent safety net that could catch any American that falls into poverty and would rescue the millions who are already there.

Few scholars disagree with the Cloward-Piven thesis that civil unrest in the 1960s led to an increase in the welfare state. Only a few scholars disagree with the Cloward-Piven thesis, but some like Robert Albritton do, asserting that welfare "caseloads were largely a function of changes in the structure of welfare policy relationships between the federal government and the states, while the riots and other social disorders had different origins" (Albritton, 1010). However, others have tested the Cloward-Piven thesis scholars have tested the Cloward-Piven Strategy, including Sanford Schram and J. Patrick Turbett (Schram and Turbett), Alexander Hicks and Duane Swank in a time-series analysis of national-level data between 1948 and 1977 (Hicks and Swank), Henry Freedman former director of the Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law (Freedman), and Larry Isaac and William Kelly (Isaac and Kelly) to name only a few, and have found that the correlation between social welfare spending and civil unrest is very strong and very significant. Though many scholars agree that civil unrest significantly caused welfare increases in the 1960s, few advocate the Cloward-Piven Strategy as a successful plan to change public policy.

The completion of all steps in the Cloward-Piven Strategy has never happened in the United States; however, civil unrest has yielded welfare concessions during two recent periods in 20th century American history: the Great Depression and the late 60s. The disenfranchised and poor are likely to use any means they have available to them to secure the financial safety and livelihood of their families. Yet, unrest is usually a reaction to poor conditions and not an orchestrated movement in specific conditions; it can yield a desirable outcome for those trying but failing to 'make ends meet,' but may not work in every case.

VI. The Great Depression, Civil Unrest, and Public Policy

The greatest economic crisis that ever occurred in American history was the Great Depression of the late 1920s and 1930s. Some scholars suggest that "during the economic downturns or depressions that have marked the advance of capitalism, the structure of market incentives simply collapses; with no demand for labor, there are no monetary rewards to guide and enforce work" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 6). Piven and Cloward note that, "without work, a way of life began to collapse. Men could not support their families, people lost their farms and their homes, the young did not marry, and many took to the road" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 61).

As unemployment skyrocketed early on during the Great Depression, President Hoover praised the success of local organizations and "asserted that the federal government could not permit local communities to abandon their 'precious possession of local initiative and responsibility" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 53). The Hoover Administration would not expand government to meet the economic needs of Americans because it believed that the economy would 'bounce back.' Piven and Cloward note that "by the spring of 1929… the number of men out of work approached 3 million; by January 1930, the figure topped 4 million; it rose to 5 million in September and reached 8 million by spring of 1931… in the spring of 1933, about 15 million men-- or about one third of the work force-- had become jobless" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 49).

The economy did not bounce back, and in the presidential election of 1932 between Franklin D. Roosevelt and incumbent Herbert Hoover, Americans choose to shift domestic public policy, FDR won 472 of the 531 electoral votes. As Piven and

Cloward explain, "[B]y the day the new administration took office in March 1933, every bank in America had closed its doors, signifying to a stunned public and Congress the totality of the collapse."

FDR was quick to move legislation through Congress to such a great extent that,

> On March 9, he signed the Emergency Banking Act…March 20, he signed the Economy Act; on March 31, the Civilian Conservation Corps was established; on April 19, the gold standard was abandoned; on May 12, the President signed the Agricultural Adjustment Act and the Federal Emergency Relief Act; on May 18, the Tennessee Valley Authority Act; on May 27, the Truth-in-Securities Act; on June 13, the Home Owners Loan Act; and on June 16, the National Industrial Recovery Act, the Glass-Steagall Banking Act, the Farm Credit Act, and the Railroad Coordination Act (Piven and Cloward 1971, 71).

In just a few months the President and Congress had established the modern American welfare state, FDR justified it by explaining, on June 8, 1934, that "if, as our Constitution tells us, our federal government was established, among other things, to promote the general welfare, it is our plain duty to provide for that security upon which welfare depends" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 76). FDR had several goals in mind: strengthening the economy and providing for its security through welfare (Piven and Cloward 1971, 40-41).

However, the economic security of the nation was not the only concern for the newly elected President; the national labor movements held many industries in a firm

grip and were striking to gain rights in the workplace. As Piven and Cloward describe it, "[S]trikers shut down entire cities–Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Toledo–and engaged in pitched battles with police and National Guard, leaving many dead or wounded. A virtual civil war had broken out between business and labor…." (Piven and Cloward 1971, 86). This civil war would eventually end as civil unrest and force declined when legal concessions and workplace rights were gained. Policy and law makers quickly discovered that "by once more enmeshing people in the work role, the cornerstone of social control in any society, it went far toward moderating civil disorder" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 97). If persons were maintained in their work roles, they could be maintained in their social roles. Cloward and Piven explain that "so long as people are fixed in their work roles, their activities and outlooks are also fixed…." (Piven and Cloward 1971, 6). If persons were kept in their societal roles, then they would not riot. Labor movements helped policymakers realize that the dole could be replaced, at least during the Great Depression, with a work program, which would not only meet the economic needs of the nation but would also preserve civil society.

As public welfare policy shifted to public work policy, Harry Hopkins became the Administrator of the newly formed Works Progress Administration (WPA) and transferred the recipients of the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) to WPA (Piven and Cloward 1971, 96). On May 12, 1933, the President signed FERA, which as one eye-witness in the FDR Administration recalls, "There was one concern–to distribute as much money as possible, as fast as possible, to as many as possible" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 75). Two years after FERA, Congress used monies appropriated under FERA to establish and run the largest work program in American history: WPA. By January, 1935,

"political circumstances were propitious for the abolition of direct relief and the substitution of work relief" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 94).

On January 4, 1935, FDR said, "We must preserve not only the bodies of the unemployed from destitution, but also their self-respect, their self-reliance and courage and determination" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 94). Three and a half million people who were receiving direct relief were to be "put to work at a 'security wage'–that is, a wage higher than relief payments but lower then prevailing wages–so as not to deter people from seeking private employment" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 95). Piven and Cloward explain that "mass unemployment [in the Great Depression] alone did not lead to the expansion of relief arrangements–not, that is, until unemployment had generated so much unrest as to threaten political stability" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 197). When unemployment was dealt with through government sponsored employment, unrest declined.

With the onset of World War Two, "the relief program [WPA] was even more sharply reduced and then terminated altogether" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 113). Charles Murray explains that in 1950 the entire federal effort for social welfare spending was summarized by three programs: Social Security, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and Unemployment Insurance (Murray, 5). During and after the war, the economic boom years began. In the early 1950s the purpose of the welfare system was still intact: Workmen's Compensation and Unemployment Insurance were connected to work, while AFDC was to take care of widows with small children who could not work (Murray, 17). Furthermore, in the late 1950s welfare programs according to those

"on the right and among large numbers of blue-collar Democrats… [that] support[ed] a healthy adult year after year" were under attack (Murray, 18).

The mass strikes of the 1930s "forced the concessions to organized labor embodied in the Wagner Act, but in the succeeding decades, it was the influence of organized labor in electoral politics that helped protect at least some of these gains" (Piven and Cloward 1966, 6). These same strikes "won the basic framework of industrial relations system that, at least for a time, brought many working people in what is called the middle class" (Piven and Cloward 1966, 2). Strikes acted as the major political expression of a rising middle class in the 1930s and crippled entire industries until the demands of the strikers were heard and concessions made. In some cities like "Chicago, where half the working force was unemployed and Socialists and Communists were organizing mass demonstrations, the Mayor pleaded for the federal government to send 150 million dollars for relief immediately rather than federal troops later" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 67). The early roots of the Red Scare were in the labor movement and its unrest in the early 1930s. The great fear was that, as "Congressman Hamilton Fish Jr. announced to House of Representatives, "[I]f we don't [secure the nation] under the existing system, the people will change the system" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 68).

Although "the spread of destitution itself was no great force…[when] the destitute became volatile, and unrest spread throughout the country…these conditions, in turn, produced a massive electoral convulsion that government responded" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 76-77). As many began to define their hardships "not as an individual fate, but as a collective disaster, not as a mark of individual failure, but as a fault of 'the system' [and] as the legitimacy of economic arrangements weakened, anger and protest

escalated" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 62). Though turbulence had produced the welfare state, "[d]irect relief had been converted into work relief; then work relief was cut back and the unemployed were thrown upon state and local agencies…" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 117).

Civil unrest and political change forced political concessions for a suddenly impoverished group and helped them create their own American dream through the middle-class. As Piven and Cloward explain, "[O]nce relief-giving had expanded, unrest rapidly subsided, and then aid was cut back–which meant, among other things, that larger numbers of people were put off the rolls and thrust back into a labor market still glutted with unemployment" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 45). However, while the unrest of the 1960s followed a pattern similar to the 30s, cities that were swelling from the influx of black migration to the north were not prepared to accept a new class of poverty that it had never dealt with before: black poverty.

VII. Southern Modernization and Black Migration

Living in the segregated South was to live in fear as a second-class citizen for blacks. Although blacks had lived in poverty in the South, their ability to force political concessions and welfare benefits was significantly less because "blacks were prevented from creating civil unrest by the near-feudal system established in the South (Piven and Cloward 1971, 223). Piven and Cloward explain that "there was one expectation that lost none of its predictability in the rural South: that coercive force would be unfailingly wielded to deal with any who participated in protest" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 212). Although sharecropping in the South made conditions for blacks worsen, "inequality in the welfare system prevented the statistics to reflect this rise within black communities" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 206). Blacks were denied welfare benefits allotted to whites and eventually stopped applying for them altogether. In addition to inequality in welfare benefits, the agricultural modernization of the South forced countless numbers of blacks into poverty. They were denied benefits that whites suffering from the same technological advancements were afforded.

For the Civil Rights Movement, "economic modernization, coupled with separation and concentration, both freed blacks from the feudal constraints and enabled them to construct the occupational and institutional foundations from which to mount resistance to white oppression" (Piven and Cloward 1977, 205). The Civil Rights Movement strengthened in the South as a result of the technological advances in agriculture that allowed blacks to leave the field and travel to southern cities like Birmingham and Montgomery, which became a center of the civil rights struggle. However, for many of the poor, industrialization forced blacks into northern cities.

Harrington explains, "As the society became more technological, more skilled, those who learn to work the machines, who get the expanding education, move up" (Harrington, 12). "Expanding education" was not available to blacks during the time of the great migration, which was before *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954). As Harrington further suggests, history shows us that "if there is technological advance without social advance, there is, almost automatically, an increase in human misery, in impoverishment" (Harrington, 178). For blacks fleeing the South in the quest for a better life in the north, the technological advance in the agriculture industry and Jim Crow segregation left them poor and social outcast.

For not a few, but most, blacks displaced by the agricultural revolution, "when given the option between migration and volatility in the South the obviously safer option of the two was migration" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 213). Piven and Cloward explain that "basic to capitalist economic arrangements is change… workers must acquire new skills; they must move to new locales" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 4). Blacks moved to northern cities in huge numbers: "In 1940, only half of all blacks lived in urban areas…and 80 percent in 1965 [lived in urban areas]…" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 214). Of the "twenty million Americans who left the land after 1940…, two thirds of those had earned their living in agriculture [in the South]" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 214). As Piven and Cloward describe, "With the outbreak of World War II and the promise of jobs in the urban defense industries, the movement to the cities [increased]" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 214). The poor went where they believed work was available: the north. However, Frazier explains, "the Negro migrant in seeking to escape the control exercised by the dominant race was unconscious of the personal crisis that he had to face in the

unsympathetic and impersonal environment of northern cities…" (Frazier, 227). Life in the city would not be easier for the blacks who migrated there.

Moynihan reminds us simply, "County life and city life are profoundly different" (Moynihan, 28). It is not easy for any person, even one with the economic means and who chooses to move to the city not out of necessity but because he or she desire to live there, to adjust to life in the city. Harrington explains that "people who are literally driven out of the land are utterly unprepared for city life" (Harrington, 165). Upon entering the city blacks discovered that, unlike in the South, they could apply for and receive aid in the welfare state of the north. Although relief was available, many blacks thought it inappropriate to participate in the relief system. Of the poor blacks that did migrate to the Northern cities, less than half were receiving welfare benefits after living in the city for a year (Piven and Cloward 1971, 219).

The ghetto is often the center of migration from rural communities to the cities (Harrington, 65). Upon arriving in the cities, blacks went to those places they knew other blacks had gone before them. As more blacks entered the welfare rolls in the 1950s and 1960s, what most scholars refer to as the 'welfare explosion' occurred. Sudden increases in the welfare rolls surprised policymakers. Much of the explanation for the rise in the number of welfare recipients in the 50s and 60s can be explained by black migration. The reality is that no actual economic change in the lives of the recipients occurred other than the fact they were the southern-rural poor and then became the northern-urban poor. A population that fled poverty in the South during agricultural modernization in the 1940s and 1950s ultimately rediscovered poverty in the northern ghetto (Wilson 1985, 245).

VIII. Life for Blacks in the City Slum/Ghetto

The three main areas that encompass life for blacks in the ghetto are the school, home, and street. Throughout the U.S., the desegregated school was a monument of equal rights. However, in the ghetto where it had been desegregated and removed from the communities where the students lived, the school became the place where academic interest dies. What Harrington described in the 1960s was life for the first generation of blacks born after the migration of their parents from the South to the North. Harrington explains that "children when they first begin school… show off their books; they are interested and friendly. But then, in a few years, they learn. Their schools are crowded; the instruction is inferior; and the neighborhood is omnipresent and more powerful than the classroom" (Harrington, 66). The negative effects of a weak school are made worse by the street, and many youth find personal formation and an education on the street as soon as they can drop out of school.

For those youth that do not succumb to the pressures of street life, "[their] parents are anxious for the children to go to work; the pupils are pent up, waiting for the moment when their education has complied with the law" (Harrington, 9). The trends that Harrington saw in the 1960s continued into the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Wilson explains that "only 42 percent of black youths who had not enrolled in college had jobs in October after graduating from high school a few months earlier in June, compared with 69 percent of their white counterparts" (Wilson 1996-97, 577). Simply put, there is "no systematic process to assist high school graduates [in the ghettos] to move smoothly from school into employment" (Wilson 1996-97, 577). Furthermore, the U.S. has shifted from low-skill labor to specialized labor, and because blacks in the ghetto do not receive a

proper education they are unable to adapt to the changes in specialization industries, where job growth exists (Wilson 2009, 9). Although schools began declining in most communities during the 1960s, "everything we know about slum schools suggests that the deterioration in these schools, which served the most disadvantaged of all students, was greater than anywhere else" (Murray, 108).

Problems in the schools in the 1960s were not independent of the other struggles in the ghetto communities. Murray elaborates, "The changes in welfare *and* changes in the risks attached to crime *and* changes in the educational environment reinforced each other" (Murray, 167). The great difficulty for urban blacks in overcoming the negative aspects of their community was that, though a personal victory might be gained against one aspect (perhaps through a stronger education in a private school outside of the community), other aspects of life like crime, drugs, and violence continue to affect them during their most formative years. Murray contends that the majority of the rise in crime in the city can be attributed to "male[s]…under twenty-five years of age… [who] were more often black than white" (Murray, 115). The poverty of the ghetto closed legitimate avenues for personal income; therefore, he observed, "One of the ways [young black men in the 1960s] were surviving was through crime" (Murray, 113). Crime was not the only cause for the terrible conditions present in the urban ghetto during the 1960s. Murray further argued, "The changes in welfare and changes in the risks attached to crime and changes in the educational environment reinforced each other" (Murray, 167).

Murray is careful to explain: "It is true that rising crime has been a problem for everyone… But more than enough attention has gravitated to such numbers, and to the image of the black urban street mugger preying on the innocent white middle class. The

purpose of the comparison I have drawn is to highlight the great human price paid for this increase in crime by poor people and blacks" (Murray, 120). However, he continues by multiplying examples in which the crime rate in the urban communities grew. "In 1960," he explains, "when our detailed examination of the racial breakdown for crime other than homicide begins, blacks were being arrested for violent crimes at a rate 10 times the rate for white" (Murray, 117). During the 1960s blacks were arrested regularly, perhaps sometimes just because they were black, but often convictions were justified, and few scholars would argue that violence and crime was not a huge part of life in the ghetto. Desperation can encourage many people, regardless of race or socioeconomic background, to do things that others would consider completely socially unacceptable. When the school and street act against the neighborhood resident's best interest by providing a subpar education and social development steeped in crime and violence, the only place of refuge would be the home. Unfortunately, life in the ghetto has transformed home life as well.

The complex issue of social structure in the household is one often debated by welfare policymakers. Wilson claims that there are only weak connections between marriage and economic stability in the urban communities (Wilson 2009, 132), but also explains, however, that nationally 10 percent of children in husband-wife families live in poverty, while as much as 50 percent of children in mother-only families live in poverty (Wilson 2009, 102). Though the relationship between marriage and poverty may not be causal, according to many statisticians the percentage of female-headed households in poverty is greater than the percentage of husband-wife led households. Still, Mead suggests, "Higher unwed pregnancy is the principal reason why minorities suffer more

poverty than whites" (Mead, 30). For Mead, minorities are in poverty because they have higher percentages of unwed pregnancies and female-headed households. Moynihan comments, "A family is formed when a child is born. When an unwed teenager gives birth, a broken family is formed" (Moynihan, 168). American public policy was directed at families that are broken: as Moynihan describes it, "The AFDC program [was] a family allowance for broken families," while it should have been directed to families to prevent them from being 'broken' (Moynihan, 8).

A woman who has a child and raises the child without the aid of the child's father is unable to provide for the needs of her child as adequately as she could if the employed husband was present in the home contributing financially. However, as Wilson illuminates, "[E]mployed fathers are two and a half times more likely than non-employed father to marry the mother of their first child" (Wilson 1989, 187). Piven and Cloward argue that, when men are increasingly no longer attached to their work roles in their families, their attachment to their families also decreases (Piven and Cloward 1971, 343). But unemployment is not the only factor that contributed to the reality that in "the 1970's, female-headed families became the majority of poor families with children" (Moynihan, 46); that trend continues today.

The social structure of life for blacks in the South was brought to the North. Many Americans believe that marriage is a 'normal' arrangement for most people. However, for blacks in the South who were enslaved, marriage was explicitly forbidden by owners and lawmakers alike. King described the situation: "On the plantation the institution of legal marriage did not exist" (Rainwater and Yancey quoting Martin Luther King Jr., 404). Blacks did not marry, not because of some defect in their culture but because they would

be punished if they did. The black community is matriarchic-led because families centered on the women who would raise children long after the child's father was sold and forced to leave the plantation. The ghetto community was a projection of the poor Southern plantation in that it perpetuated a life of fear, ignorance, and illegitimacy, not because those who inhabited it were morally or culturally deficient, but because they had been kept in social structures that defined them as a sub-human people.

To address the issue of poverty and degraded human life in the ghetto lawmakers and policy analysts attempted to focus on the family unit as the basic unit through which all struggles in the community flow. Moynihan quotes President Lyndon B. Johnson as exclaiming, "Unless we work to strengthen the family, to create conditions under which most parents will stay together…all the rest will never be enough to cut completely the circle of despair and deprivation" (Moynihan, 33). Even before the Great Society, Murray explains, "John Kennedy's message called for welfare reform to put 'the integrity and preservation of the family unit' first on the list of his goals for public welfare" (Murray, 124). The family-unit as a social structure that transforms a child during his or her formative years was all but lacking in most ghettos. King explains, "Family life not only educates in general but its quality ultimately determines the individual's capacity to love" (Rainwater and Yancey quoting Martin Luther King Jr., 403). Love in the ghetto was in great demand but had short supply.

In the powder keg that was the ghetto of the late 50s and 60s the three-fold struggles of the home, school, and street prepared a generation to react in ways that those in the greater city-wide and nation-wide community would understand and to which they might react: civil unrest. As the authors of the Cloward-Piven Strategy explain, "Freed

from feudal controls, blacks began to protest the oppression they had always known. Moreover, segregation in the northern ghettos provided a degree of security and concentrated numbers provided a sense of strength" (Piven and Cloward 1977, 203). Furthermore, this struggle was hundreds of years in the making: "This movement welled up out of the bowels of the northern ghetto so densely packed with the victims of agricultural displacement and urban unemployment. It was, in short, a struggle by the black masses for the sheer right to survival" (Piven and Cloward 1977, 265).

IX. Civil Rights and Welfare Rights Unrest in the 60s

Though not as well-known, the welfare rights movement occurred simultaneously with the civil rights movement. As Piven and Cloward explain, "The welfare explosion occurred during several years of the greatest domestic disorder since the 1930's-- perhaps the greatest in our history. It was concurrent with the turmoil produced by the civil rights struggle…" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 198). As Americans began to contemplate what the word 'equality' meant, poverty took center-stage. Nathan Glazer writes, "It is the civil rights revolution that makes poverty a great issue in America not merely poverty" (Wilson 1985, 235). Wayne Santoro explains, "Less than 5 percent of the public listed civil rights issues as the nation's most important problem during the '40s and most of the '50s" (Santoro, 1396). However, he further notes that, "During [the mid-60s], especially between 1963 and 1965, at times more than half of the public-the largest share ever recorded-listed civil rights as the country's most important problem" (Santoro, 1397).

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States was an expansive campaign, and its history is complex. There is space for only a brief discussion here. The Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954) that "separate but equal" was not equal under the 14th Amendment signaled an end to legal segregation in the United States. Although one decade after *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* progressed and monumental civil rights legislation would pass as law, "ten years of private civil rights and federal activity [that] had produced legislation guaranteeing equal rights… was just a key to open gates, not to provide the ability to walk through them" (Rainwater and Yancey, 143). The next question many rights activists began to ask was what could be done, now that legal rights had been secured, to redress the social

inequalities between blacks and whites that had been perpetuated under the legally segregated system.

Firstly, for legislation to pass providing legal equality to blacks, the public had to be aware of the extent to which the claim of the protesters was correct. As Santoro explains, "[I]mages of white brutality against civil rights advocates in Selma affected government action because members of Congress and the public viewed such violence as reprehensible" (Santoro, 1395). Innocent people marching peaceably in a city being mauled by dogs and sprayed with high-pressure hoses stirred public sympathy for the oppressed blacks in the South. However, just as a "civil rights movement had triumphed [with the passage of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*]…, thirteen days later came the first of the race riots, in Harlem" (Murray, 30). It was evident that many black movements including "Black Power frightened mainstream America; [and they] produced a mixture of intrigue, awe, and anxiety…" (Joseph, 4).

Secondly, for blacks to receive welfare concessions the unrest had to be considered an urban issue and policymakers had to believe that welfare benefits would address some of the issues in the ghetto community. Later analysts agree, after comparing welfare benefits with the severity and number of riots occurring in large cities, "racial disorder severity will have a greater impact on relief-program expansion than sheer disorder frequency…" (Isaac and Kelly, 1360). American blacks were greatly concentrated in the city; as Betz elaborates, "By 1960, 90 percent of all Northern blacks were concentrated in ten of the most populous Northern states" (Betz, 346). In only a few years the severity and number of ghetto riots drastically increased in many states across the United States. Ten years after the fact, Piven and Cloward explain, "There were

twenty-one major riots and civil disorders in 1966 and eighty-three major disturbances in 1967" (Piven and Cloward 1977, 272). Unrest was not a New York City problem or a Chicago problem; it was an American problem.

Though obviously the word 'riot' does not connote a peaceable gathering, it is important to understand the severity and extent to which riots were occurring across the U.S. during the 1960's. Murray describes the national situation:

> Roxbury and Newark, in which riots broke out in the summer of 1967, and more recently Detroit, with forty-three dead in four days of violence, had been battlefields closer to home. The riots continued that summer in Rochester, Paterson, Philadelphia, and Dixmoor, a suburb of Chicago [in 1964]…, then erupted again in Watts, in August 1965, with a violence that dwarfed the disturbances of the preceding year. They would crescendo in 1967, with riots in more than thirty cities (Murray, 30).

It is important to note that the majority of black unrest occurred *after* the civil rights concessions made through the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*. Poor blacks in the city acted out in ways different from the Civil Rights Movement, but after the movement had secured legal rights.

The lesser known Poor People's Campaign led by Martin Luther King Jr. was a cause pursued following the Civil Rights Movement with the purpose of bringing economic security to the millions of American poor through a similar strategy of non-violence. Sadly, King would not live long enough to establish a strong movement. King, in commenting on riots occurring throughout the nation regarding welfare rights,

exclaimed, “A profound judgment of today’s riots was expressed by Victor Hugo a century ago. He said, ‘if a soul is left in darkness, sins will be committed. The guilty one is not he who commits the sin, but he who causes the darkness” (Murray, 31). The darkness of the ghetto had prepared the blacks living there to initiate a campaign of civil unrest in order to secure power out of powerlessness and economic stability amidst instability.

Concessions did not come all at once. As rioting increased, the slow wheels of government began turning to prevent escalation in unrest. Betz notes, “Riots do appear to elicit welfare increases at the local level, the year following the disturbance” (Betz, 352). In other cases benefits were secured at the federal level as quickly as at the local level of government. Schram and Turbett examined the correlation between rioting in the cities and the increase in welfare (using AFDC as the variable) for 1965-1968 [peak riot years] and 1969-1972 [immediate post-riot years] (Schram and Turbett, 411).What they soon discovered was that “civil disorder in the late 1960s impelled the national government to enact liberalizations of welfare policy which in turn were most actively implemented by those states most wracked by rioting” (Schram and Turbett, 408). The poor had discovered that unrest could be used to secure not only legal rights, as it had been through the Civil Rights Movement, but also economic rights. Unrest in the city exhibited itself in many ways. Rioting was the most frequent form of protest; however, some scholars have recently determined that “by the 1960s street crime was one target of welfare outputs and on cue for their expansion” (Hicks and Swank, 712).

The increase in welfare expenditures in the 1960s was significantly related to rioting: “The most consistent and dramatic pattern of welfare expenditures is found

among the 16 cities which experienced riots in 1967… welfare expenditures on the average increased 57 percent from 1967-1968. This is over 19 times the average yearly increase…" (Betz, 351). The number of poor people in the cities had not increased 19 times, nor had their poverty become 19 times worse. The fact is that unrest forced the recognition of economic rights for the black urban poor. Piven and Cloward explain, "Among urban counties, the steepest increase (217 per cent) occurred in the 5 most populous ones-New York, Philadelphia, Cook County (Chicago), Wayne County (Detroit), and Los Angeles" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 185). However, this movement was not one bent on receiving checks from the U.S. government, payable to the poor. Rather, the main goal of the leaders in the welfare rights movement was economic stability in poor urban communities. As a great critic of the modern welfare state explains, "The essence of the unifying appeal was expressed in the slogan that later became the rallying cry for the War on Poverty, 'give me a hand, not a handout'" (Murray, 22). Moynihan might have argued today that the broken economic system in the ghetto that had established unemployment and underemployment increased the percentage of uninvolved fathers in the community. It also increased the draw of the street life for youth longing for a stable social group and finding it in the gang.

Once the rioting had ended and welfare programs had been established or expanded, the poor had received some measure of economic security; however, the real needs of the ghetto had not been met. After just "two years [1967 and 1968] alone more than 300 persons were killed, some 10,000 injured, and 100,000 arrested" (Piven and Cloward 1979, 1015), but the systems that nourished urban poverty remained in place. The Cloward-Piven Strategy yielded a result, but it was not the desired result. Piven and

Cloward further advocate a full enrollment of all poor people onto the welfare rolls in order to force a collapse of the entire welfare system, leading to the legal establishment of a minimum level of income above the poverty line. A legislated minimum income does not exist in the United States, and minimum wage laws often do not lift people out of poverty. Welfare concessions in the late 60s were not so much a response to the needs of the poor–though they were in part–as a concession to the trouble the poor made (Piven and Cloward 1971, 336).

In summation, the riots that occurred after the Civil Rights Movement forced lawmakers to initiate and/or expand welfare programs, but did not push them to address the overarching causes of black poverty. The unrest caused by black rioting in most of the nation's northern cities was brought into the family living room through media coverage of the civil unrest, as it was when footage of Southern violence against blacks appeared on the 5 o'clock news. As Murray explained in 1968, "[T]he President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders… would release its report… recommend[ing] emergency legislation to create two million new jobs, lest the deep frustration of the poor push them to more desperate measures to pry action from an unresponsive system" (Murray, 7). The federal government had yielded temporary economic concessions to the poor to smother discontent and unrest, but afterwards the government began initiating work programs to supplement and then replace welfare benefits. The poor had forced some semblance of economic security, but it did not transform the ghetto economic system. Government provided an adhesive bandage (welfare) for a gaping wound (ghetto poverty).

X. Poverty and Appalachia: Piven/Cloward Strategy Tested

A less known truth about American public policy in the welfare state is that, "although there was some discussion of the problems of black poverty, the focus of attention shortly before and immediately after the assassination of President John. F. Kennedy was disproportionately on white Appalachian poverty" (Wilson 1985, 235). If asked to describe a poor child the average American was likely to describe a dirty, white child living in the hills of Pennsylvania and not a black child in Harlem. The Appalachian poor are similar to the farming poor except that they depend on local industries other than agriculture, mostly mining. Many of the Appalachian poor have become poor because their principal industry–mining–either shut down or automated, thereby decreasing the need for a large human labor force (Harrington, 27). Some are kept poor by the low wages paid to them by the businesses which employ them.

Although many of the former miners of Appalachia became poor when the industry they labored in declined, "Appalachia is not poor, but its people are… In a word, Central Appalachia is a region of poverty amidst riches; a place of glaring inequalities" (Gaventa, 35). The natural resources in the Appalachian hills are of considerable economic value. However, those resources are owned by, and the profit from their exploitation goes directly to, mining corporations; very little trickles down to the miner. The Appalachian company town was entirely dependent on the owners of the company (Gaventa, 57). In many towns economic systems were established through which even the meager wages the miner earned were funneled back to the company through the 'company store.'

Should the miners in a community choose to revolt against the company and local government, they would be ignored because in many of these communities resources had been depleted and the company had left, taking with it the only capital the community would ever see. In instances when the company was still present and the community of miners' revolted the company could quickly mobilize support against the miners, who could be dismissed with terms like 'unthankful' and 'violent.' Gaventa explains, "The pattern is one in which challenges by the people of the Valley to the massive inequalities they face have been precluded or repelled, time and again, by the power which surrounds and protects the beneficiaries of the inequalities" (Gaventa, 252). Whether that power comes from the United States government, as it breaks up protests to secure a possible source of fuel during war time, or it comes from the company hiring non-union 'scabs' from the next town over in which the mine 'dried up," the result is the same: powerlessness perpetuated.

The lower-middle-class working miners and their families maintain a basic level of life as the mine produces, but when the mine stops producing, poverty hits overnight (literally in some cases). Harrington explains that in thriving communities, "Once depression hits an area, its very life seems to leave" (Harrington, 32). In some areas several generations of family members have been employed by the mine. For these people who have known only the hills of Appalachia as home, leaving is not an option:

> In short the simple prescription of the comfortable middle-class citizen, 'I can't see why those people don't just move, but I guess they're lazy,' is spoken out of profound ignorance. There are many reasons why they can't move; and in many cases it wouldn't make any difference if they did.

> These people are subject to a temporary, cyclical kind of joblessness. They are more often ones who have had their very function in the economy obliterated (Harrington, 34).

Work one day did not promise financial security the next day. For some who still inhabit the Appalachian region, living in old chicken coops and traveling on four-wheelers, poverty is the only life they have known.

For the hardworking miners who had become unemployed the word 'idleness' was one of the most distasteful trisyllabic words to be uttered at the dinner table or in town. Men who derive their personal value in a large part from how they earn money to put food on their family's table "would take low-paying jobs, they would downgrade their skill, and they would accept humiliation rather than go on the public dole" (Harrington, 35). As pride decreased, humiliation increased, and with each new generation born to poverty in Appalachia, the dole became the only alternative to starvation and homelessness.

The Cloward-Piven Strategy did not lead to the same outcomes in the Appalachian communities that it did in the urban communities. The Cloward-Piven Strategy applied well to the city because the ability to mobilize a large number of protesters in a short time is greater in the city than it is in the hills of Appalachia. Most Appalachian communities do not have the populations necessary for civil unrest to result in welfare concessions, and even if they did, their demands are to restore their resources and jobs, not provide welfare. The Appalachian application of the Cloward-Piven Strategy yields an important conclusion: "[W]ithin or beyond Appalachia, power

relationships do impede challenges to social and economic inequalities…. [This means that] theorists and practitioners of democracy should turn their energies to considering how the power relationships of contemporary society are to be altered if the social and economic deprivations of the people within it are to be overcome" (Gaventa, 261).

In local Appalachian communities the institution that had the power to correct economic and social inequalities was unwilling to do so because it was the same institution that was perpetuating those inequalities. The two means of influence the poor have at their disposal–their votes, and their numbers–were unhelpful in the Appalachian context because their votes did not influence institutions capable fixing the inequality, and their numbers were little and easily replaced by poor in the neighboring town. "If the riots were instigated by Chicanos or Appalachian whites, municipal officials in most cities would probably have more options in making concessions without jeopardizing their support from traditional white constituencies" (Betz, 354) and if blacks at the numbers present in the ghetto were in the mining communities, they would have the numbers necessary in correcting inequalities.

CONCLUSION:

CIVIL UNREST FOR THE POWERLESS CAN IN SOME CASES HELP FORCE POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL CONCESSIONS

XI. Christian Response to American Poverty

For those Americans who identify themselves as Christian and allow their Christianity to influence their political conscience, the welfare debate is focused on a central concern of Christianity and Judaism: the poor. Jesus regularly spoke about the poor, and much of his condemnation was directed toward those who ignored the poor. Christian influence in public policy has created a divide among Christians. Though some would argue that there is a 'true' Christian perspective on provision for the poor, the debate continues in the United States. Christian influence in welfare policy has a history that begins in the New England protestant communities of the late 17th and 18th centuries. Over time, the Protestant work ethic lost its religious ties and became a predominantly secular philosophy. As one scholarly source explains, "[T]he Protestant work ethic, which has its roots in Calvinist Puritanism, has metamorphosed over time from a religious to a cultural mandate" (Hudson and Coukos, 3). Two competing Christian views emerged in the early 20th century, one based on what human dignity requires and the other advocating welfare assistance as charity and not as the welfare rights movement has portrayed it–as justice.

Several scholars explain the continuation of a historical tradition of the protestant work ethic in the United States as being transformed by "Americans [who] are utopian moralists [and] who press hard to institutionalize virtue, to destroy evil people, and eliminate wicked institutions and practices…, viewing social and political dramas as morality plays…, [making] compromise virtually unthinkable" (Lipset, 63). When policy debates are framed as a battle between moral absolutes, good and evil, compromise is stifled. In a society where, "[e]conomic success is defined by 'winners' and 'losers,' and

the losers must bear the responsibility for their outcomes" (Hudson and Coukos, 3), apathy dominates public opinion regarding the losers: the poor. According to the Protestant work ethic, wealth is a sign of God's blessing; those who labor faithfully are rewarded. Historians agree, "The early Calvinists believed that God has called us to work in our vocation. Those who do his will by engaging in consistent and diligent labor, and who resist the temptations of the flesh, will be materially blessed… [therefore] the destitute are morally suspect" (Hudson and Coukos, 4).

The historical debate has continued into the 21st century so perhaps has the work ethic. So "the Protestant ethos may be more evident in our thoughts and feeling about the poor than in the way we regard the wealthy" (Hudson and Coukos, 22). Many in the United States do not view the poor as the blessed of God. The poor are viewed as sinners and the morally reckless. But on the other side of the Christian debate are those who seek to counter the Protestant work ethic in America, e.g., Nicholas Wolterstorff through his work *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*.

Martin Luther King, Jr., proclaimed in an address, "America owes a debt to justice which it has only begun to pay. If it loses the will to finish or slackens in its determination, history will recall its crimes and the country that would be great will lack the most indispensable element of greatness–justice" (Rainwater and Yancey quoting Martin Luther King Jr., 409). King was not speaking of civil rights; rather he was describing the struggle for welfare rights and economic rights for marginalized people including urban blacks. Twenty years later as welfare reform under the Reagan Administration began, Wolterstorff took note, "With the political transformation presently taking place in the United States, I hear a great deal of talk about various rights

to freedom and protection, but I hear nothing about rights to sustenance, nothing about the rights of the poor" (Wolterstorff, 82). King and Wolterstorff, as Christians, saw the campaign for welfare rights as an issue of justice. Scholars known for advocating an overhaul of the welfare state and who are against welfare 'rights' language are still quick to agree that "the reforms flowing from the new wisdom of the 1960s were a blunder on purely pragmatic grounds. The changes we made were not just policy errors, not inexpedient, but unjust" (Murray, 219).

Wolterstorff articulates a complex argument through which he explains that one of the four "God-given rights of the poor person [is a] right to sustenance" (Wolterstorff, 81). "God-given rights" are the same as those found in the U.S. Declaration of Independence. American civil rights are dependent on a right to sustenance because, according to Wolterstorff, if a person is starving, they are unable to exercise other rights afforded them under the Constitution, like the right to free speech (Wolterstorff, 82). These rights are not established by governments, or institutions; they come directly from God and supersede all political systems and policies. To be clear, Wolterstorff asserts with conviction, "I want to say, as emphatically as I can, that [a Christian's] concern with poverty is not an issue of generosity but of rights" (Wolterstorff, 82). Of course, "One person's right places an obligation, a responsibility, on others" (Wolterstorff, 82). Wolterstorff argues that justice obligates the better off to help the worse off.

Although Wolterstorff advocates assistance for the poor, he also goes further: "No doubt the most promising and dignity-respecting way of securing the sustenance rights of those impoverished masses in the non-core areas of our world-system is not to give them doles, but to uncover the causes of the systemic poverty and then working at eliminating

those causes" (Wolterstorff, 85). Scholars who come from a more conservative school of thought argue against using justice as a lens through which to view welfare assistance. Instead, for example, Mead argues, "Rather than justice, the proper rubric for today's antipoverty quest is charity" (Mead, 106). God commands attention to the poor but not as a matter of right; rather, as a means of restoring community. Therefore, "we must be generous toward the poor, but should also expect good behavior from them" (Mead, 3).

To the political class in Washington, "the 'religious right'… is a force working to downsize government and terminate public concern for justice…, but evangelicals recently have become less political and more concerned about improving their communities including uplifting the poor" (Mead, 93). Having attended the Christian Student Leadership Conference hosted by the National Association of Evangelicals in Washington, D.C., I heard much conversation among representatives of Christian liberal arts colleges like mine on the direction of American welfare policy. Most attendees affirmed that the government ought to participate in provision for the poor and that this call is heard throughout Scripture. However, when pushed on the issue, most evangelicals present at the conference agreed with Mead that God commands attention to the poor, but not as a matter of justice.

Many younger evangelicals in Christian liberal arts institutions throughout the U.S. are critically evaluating the political traditions of their parents as they wrestle with the biblical themes of justice and poverty. Biblical analysis of poverty has been a common venture, for policymakers and politicians alike not only describe themselves as Christian, but also represent large Christian constituencies. Earlier efforts were also motivated by Christian concern. President Johnson proclaimed, "The Scripture promises:

'I shall light a candle of understanding in thine heart, which shall not be put out.' Together, and with millions more, we can light that candle of understanding [about poverty in the United States] in the heart of all America" (Rainwater and Yancey quoting Lyndon B. Johnson, 132). "When asked by a reporter to state his philosophy, [FDR] responded, 'I am a Christian and a Democrat–that's all'" (Fine, 381). For these presidents who called themselves Christians, Democratic Party affiliation did not contradict Christian religious conviction.

The welfare state can also be examined through a lens of guilt instead of justice. "The more we pay," Murray explains, "the more certain we can be that we have done our part, and it is essential that we feel that way regardless of what we accomplish" (Murray, 235). When policymakers create programs to aid the poor, Murray goes on, all the "tax checks we write buy us, for relatively little money and no effort at all, [is] a quieted conscience" (Murray, 235). A cynical view of the modern American welfare state is that racism and oppression of the past toward blacks is being atoned for in the collective white conscience, one welfare payment at a time.

Though disagreement continues among Christians about what should motivate aid to the poor and what, if any, behaviors should be enforced or discouraged, most agree that "the Biblical tradition…does in principle permit some transfer of wealth from the better off to help the less fortunate" (Mead, 53). Christian influence in the welfare state has shaped the debate on how and what to provide for the poor. However, the fact remains that poverty in the United States is still great, and despite the forced concessions gained by the poor the same cry of Harrington in the 1960s holds true today: "Americans

are, at this very moment, maimed in body and spirit, existing at levels beneath those necessary for human decency…. [P]overty twists and deforms the spirit" (Harrington, 2).

XII. How to Fix a Broken System

Poor black ghetto inhabitants rioted as a result of the inhuman conditions in which they were living in the 1960s. Responding to the growing civil unrest, the federal government conceded a basic level of economic security through advancing and expanding welfare programs, which funneled funds directly into poor communities in cities across the United States. However, "when the economy is convulsed and the poor are disruptive and threaten to revolt, the relief policy is suddenly liberalized to preserve order and pacify the masses.… When popular unrest subsides, however, the work ethic is speedily restored to its paramount position" (Freedman, 208). Policymakers, knowing the value of the work-role in reinforcing social expectations and decreasing civil unrest, increased requirements for work as civil unrest declined and curbed welfare benefits in the 70s.

When the Cloward-Piven Strategy was tested in poor Appalachian communities, it yielded a strikingly (no pun intended) different outcome. The poor in the hilly communities of Appalachia acted with unrest to establish fairer wages and more economic freedom, but to no avail. The work-role could not be enforced in Appalachian communities when the mines ran out. There was no work to enforce. Benefits for the urban communities have also bounced back and forth between work requirements and no work requirements because the ghetto community does not have the financial stability to support jobs for the large number of poor living in the slum. Many scholars agree that the modern welfare state has failed the poor. However, there are many differing opinions regarding what, if anything, would end poverty in the wealthiest nation in the world.

Some scholars argue that the largest predictor of poverty is unemployment. Mead explains, "Traditionally American adults were expected to get through school, go to work, marry, and have children, in that order" (Mead, 29). Piven and Cloward explain, for blacks in the urban communities during and after the great migration north, "Official nonwhite unemployment stood at 4.5 percent in the last year of the [Korean] war [1953], rose to 13 percent in the recession of 1958, and remained above 10 percent until the escalation of the war in Vietnam" (Piven and Cloward 1977, 267). Unemployment among blacks in the ghetto was increasing as the population grew and fewer jobs were unavailable. Without the capital or backing of a banking institution (which regularly denied loan requests based on race, and a practice later illegal), few businesses could be established and therefore few jobs created.

Examining the 30 year period in which the welfare state expanded most before the welfare reforms of the 80s and 90s, one discovers:

> When the years from 1951 and 1980 are split into two parts, 1951-1965 and 1966-80, and the mean unemployment rate is computed for each, one finds black 20-24-year-olds experienced a 19 percent increase in unemployment [from the first part to the second part]. For 18-19-year-olds, the increase was 40 percent. For 16-17-year-olds, the increase was a remarkable 72 percent (Murray, 73).

According to these data, black unemployment drastically increased during the peak years of urban rioting, 1967 and 1968. There is an obvious unemployment issue in the ghetto and many scholars see it as the greatest cause of poverty there (Wilson 2013, 5).

However, according to Piven and Cloward, for poverty to end in the United States adequate levels of income must be assured and the right to income must be guaranteed. This is because conditional benefits violate personal civil liberty (Cloward and Piven 1975, 92).

Other policy advocates consider a federally promised income as a grossly unjust and unhelpful use of federal authority. Murray would eliminate "the entire federal welfare and income-support structure for working-aged persons," which would leave them with "no recourse whatsoever except the job market, family members, friends, and public or private locally funded services" (Murray, 228). He explains to the reader that he is not against financing anti-poverty efforts: "Billions for equal opportunity, not one cent for equal outcome–such is the slogan to inscribe on the banner of whatever cause my proposals constitute" (Murray, 233). What Murray is arguing for is a denial of the proposition that, for equality to be assured, equal outcome must be assured. Murray believes that, while funds should be available to further opportunity (scholarships for college grants for example), he does not believe that a student should be accepted to a college and graduate from a college simply to assure that he or she will be a college graduate (equal outcome). Furthermore Murray, who advocates a prevalent opinion amongst welfare policymakers and in legislatures, explains, "[his] proposal for dealing with the racial issue in social welfare is to repeal every bit of legislation and reverse every court decision that in any way requires, recommends, or awards differential treatment according to race…" (Murray, 223).

Furthermore, Murray agrees with Tom Wicker, who warned that "America would have to recognize, first, that large numbers of the poor are always going to have to be

helped…, [that] participation in our affluent society is unreal and a pipe dream…" (Murray, 40). The United States will always have poverty, according to Murray, who also opined "If the question is asked about what politically feasible bills should be introduced tomorrow… I do not know the answer, nor, to my knowledge, does anyone" (Murray, 195). Piven and Cloward are quick to disagree with Murray's approach.

Piven and Cloward, though best known for the Cloward-Piven Strategy advocated in their work, also believe that it would be more beneficial for the poor if their communities were mixed along socioeconomic lines rather than along racial lines (Cloward and Piven 1975, 165). Of course before that can happen, they argue that, "the strategy [Piven and Cloward] propose is a massive drive to recruit the poor onto the welfare rolls [which] would precipitate a profound financial and political crisis" (Piven and Cloward 1966, 272). The aim is not, however, to cause chaos in the United States, but rather, the "ultimate objective of this strategy [is] to wipe out poverty by establishing a guaranteed annual income…" (Piven and Cloward 1966, 273). The problem of poverty in the urban, rural, and suburban poor communities alike is bettered, according to Piven and Cloward by establishing a "federal program of income redistribution… to elevate the poor *en masse* from poverty" (Piven and Cloward 1966, 274).

The "economic experience of blacks in the cities during the 1950s was, in general, one of severe unemployment and underemployment" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 215). Furthermore, "Among most welfare recipients, in short, the moral imperative to work–often no matter what the work, the wage, or the child-rearing obligations of the women who presume themselves to be employable–remains deeply felt" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 172). Presently policymakers advocate work requirements in order to receive

benefits, but Piven and Cloward argue that work requirements are unlikely to have a positive effect in eliminating poverty. They explain historically, "When a particular racial group does the most menial work for the lowest wages, the relief system cooperates by reducing the amount of aid to that group or by closing off the possibility of any aid whatsoever" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 133). Work for blacks, according to Piven and Cloward, would mean a reduction in benefits and the same poverty as non-work, and so it is not a helpful strategy for poverty reduction.

Forcing work for welfare recipients, Piven and Cloward suggest, would result in the same outcomes it had in the Great Depression when "work relief appeared to threaten the private enterprise system itself [during the Great Depression]. For one thing, it was for more expensive than direct relief…" (Piven and Cloward 1971, 82). Harrington explains, "As long as there is a reservoir of cheap Negro labor, there is a means of keeping poor blacks down" (Harrington, 170). Employment is a huge difficulty for blacks in the city because, Wilson explains, unreliable transportation keeps poor blacks unemployed (Wilson 2009, 10). Most of the black or white poor do not have access to a vehicle regularly, and so full-time employment proves difficult. One structural force that contributes to poverty and inequality is federal transportation and highway policy, which shifted roads and therefore jobs to the suburbs and adversely affected blacks (Wilson 2009, 144-45). In Philadelphia, Detroit, and Baltimore, to name a few American cities, less than 20 percent of the jobs are located near the city center and slum communities (Wilson 2009, 39).

The skills necessary to maintain jobs that would pay wages to bring a person, or family, out of poverty are jobs not available to youth exiting from a broken education

system. Michael Harrington pointed out, in a recent issue of *Dissent*, that "the old immigrant groups came to America when an expanding blue-collar economy had work for grade school dropouts and men who could not even speak English, while the Negro has come to the city as an internal alien in a time of automation, a time when the number of available jobs is decreasing" (Rainwater and Yancey, 420). As automation turns into computerization in the 21st century, still fewer jobs remain that do not require a high school diploma. Also, in areas where job-training has been required for welfare recipients, "It has become disturbingly evident that work training and its successor programs of work experience and work relief make only a tiny dent in the relief rolls…" (Steiner 1971, 33).

A lack of work in the poor ghetto perpetuates the less than ideal social conditions present in the home. Wilson explains, "The lack of employment opportunities not only impoverishes the entire community; it strips the young men 'of the traditional American way of proving their manhood, namely, supporting a family." Casual sexual relations replace employment as the test of manhood in the ghetto (Wilson 1989, 186). Unlike Piven and Cloward, Wilson suggests that part of the solution might be establishing a Neo-WPA program for infrastructure in the country in which pay is less than minimum wage, so as to encourage people to find work in the private sector; however, universal health care and child care would be essential (Wilson 1996-97, 585-594). Work is not a black-issue; it is a poor-issue. One scholar explains that "future concerns should be focused on altering the economy in such a way that the Black underclass and poor whites could be incorporated into the labor market [collectively]" (Morris, 311). He further explains, "A segmented labor market locked the Black poor into dead-end, low-paying

jobs…. These poorly trained and educationally limited Blacks were becoming members of a permanent underclass" (Morris, 310).

The fact remains that blacks in the ghetto have become a "permanent underclass." This underclass was established in the rural share-cropping South and traveled north to enjoy the promised equality. Unfortunately for blacks in the United States, equality of income has been an unreachable goal. Underemployment and unemployment in the ghetto kept blacks in poverty. For those who could find work, it was irregular and temporary. One example of poor labor conditions can be seen in a Chicago artificial Christmas tree factory where the "shop hired Negroes only. That was because they were available and cheap; that was because they could be 'kept in their place'" (Harrington, 25). Eventually, as civil rights were gained in the 1950s and 1960s, blacks in the city rioted because their impoverished status had changed little.

Public policy shifts occur gradually in most cases, but in the case of urban racial tension, welfare concessions exploded quickly to suffocate civil unrest. Upon receiving temporary benefits and, eventually, inadequate permanent provision, civil unrest declined, and public opinion shifted from fear to disdain as work requirements were enforced. Many policymakers speculate about programs that could 'fix' the welfare state. Nearly all agree that the welfare state is broken, though they differ on how it could be repaired, or if it is repairable. Murray believes that the "number of 'politically feasible' changes that would also make much difference is approximately zero" (Murray, 195). Others, like Wilson, disagree with Murray:

> The short-term solutions, which range from development of job information and placement centers and subsidized car pools in the ghetto to the creation of WPA-style jobs, are more relevant to low-income Americans, but they are the kinds of opportunity-enhancing programs that Americans of all racial and class backgrounds tend to support (Wilson 1996-97, 595).

Some policy solutions are crafted from the understanding that, for poverty to decrease in the ghetto, the suburbs must believe poverty can decrease and must rethink their subtle and/or explicitly racist stereotyping of welfare recipients.

According to Murray there are two stereotypes used to describe the welfare recipient: one is "the welfare loafer, living contentedly off the dole and making no effort to work. The other is the steadfast job-seeker, fruitlessly going from door to door looking for any kind of work… More often, these people share some of the characteristics of both stereotypes at different times" (Murray, 81).

For public policy to change, public opinion must change. In the same way that "Harrington's passionate portrayal of poverty in America…, launched the poverty problem prominently into the public consciousness" (Wilson 1985, 234), academic research and analysis could yield thoughtful public opinion, which could then produce a more holistic welfare policy instead of unhelpful, paternalistic appeasement. As it stands now, the welfare state remains an institution that does help the poor but only to a limited degree. The question facing policymakers of the 21st century is whether it meets the obligation of an affluent society in dealing with its poorer citizens. Though the welfare

state is a product of unrest and unforeseen circumstances, can it be changed to provide the basic needs of a citizen in maintaining "life, liberty, and [their] pursuit of happiness?" According to Harrington a poor people's campaign need only two things: "vision and sensitivity" (Harrington, 168).

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