

1-1-2004

Welfare as a Social Control in the United States

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Welfare as a Social Control in the United States

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Thesis

M.A.

Sociology

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Published at Drinko Library

Marshall University

2004

Keywords: Poor, Welfare Reform, Deserving Poor, Undeserving Poor,
Social Welfare, Feminization of Poverty and Poverty

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ABSTRACT

Welfare as a Social Control in the United States

The question is whether the Clinton Administration “reforms” were a revolutionary concept or an extension of history’s pattern of forgetting the “deserving poor” and ignoring the “undeserving poor”.

A literature search was conducted focusing on the deserving and undeserving poor in the United States over the past century. Historically, the deserving poor were defined as people who were impoverished as a consequence of old age, mental illness, physical illness and blindness or widowed and orphaned. The undeserving poor were people who were able to work, but did not and people of color. There have been occasions when the unemployed were considered deserving, but for whatever reasons, these were temporary situations where social conflict arose: the Great Depression when millions of people became unemployed or the first four years of the civil rights movements of the 1960’s. The change in attitudes and treatment towards the poor by the government has generally been more visible during election times or when social conflict arises.

The conclusion is that there will continue to be periods of time when the deserving poor are forgotten and the undeserving poor are ignored except during periods of civil unrest when conflicts arise through citizen rebellions. Even if the United States were to go through another period of social unrest, where relief for the poor was of the utmost importance, if the past were an indicator, the relief would be temporary.

Dedicated

To Anna and Andrew

Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge the following people for their encouragement and help with the research, revisions and writing of this thesis. A great big thank you to Dr. Frederick Roth for jumping in at the last minute to serve on my committee and spending countless hours going over my manuscript and offering endless suggestions for improvement. Dr. Kenneth Ambrose for listening to my whining and complaining over the past three years as I have struggled through the thesis and graduate work. Dr. Karen Simpkins for offering her invaluable services at the last minute to help bring this paper together and for serving on my committee. Dr. Richard Garnett for offering helpful suggestions on my initial two thesis ideas. Julie Fox for her encouragement and assistance with locating invaluable material. Michael Smith and his computer wizardry for formatting this thesis at the last minute. Last but not least, thanks to my good friend Dr. Barbara Tarter for encouraging me to go back to college at the age of 40 something to receive my master's degree in the field I love, Sociology.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On August 22, 1996, President Bill Clinton signed “The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Responsibility Act”, declaring that welfare as we know it no longer existed. The slogan that accompanied the reform was, “a hand up” is better than “a hand out”.

According to McQueen (2002), welfare would no longer be guaranteed to poor families. In accordance with the 1996 Act, states were given the freedom to make their own rules concerning the deserving and undeserving poor. Each state would receive a block grant to use as they saw fit as long as they stayed within the limited federal guidelines. These guidelines included: Only families with children could receive benefits; poor families were no longer assured of cash benefits; legal immigrants would have to wait five years and illegal immigrants would not be eligible; states would have a five year maximum benefit time limit, although some allow more time and some less; the head of household would have to find work within two years; parents with children under one year of age could be exempt from work requirements; single parents with children under the age of six would get a break on the number of hours they would have to work; recipients would be able to satisfy work requirements by attending on-the-job training or by getting help with job hunting skills; unmarried teenage mothers would have to stay in high school and live with parents or in an adult-supervised setting; recipients would have to be cut off from benefits if convicted of welfare fraud and could be denied aid if convicted on drug charges.

The question is whether the Clinton Administration “reforms” were a revolutionary concept or an extension of history’s pattern of forgetting the “deserving poor” and

ignoring the “undeserving poor”.

Historically, the deserving poor were defined as people who were impoverished as a consequence of old age, mental illness, physical illness, blindness, or widowed and orphaned. The undeserving poor were people who were able to work, but did not, minorities, divorced women and women with illegitimate children. There have been occasions when the unemployed were considered deserving, but for whatever reasons, these were temporary situations like the Great Depression when millions of people became unemployed, or during the first four years of the civil rights movements of the 1960's, when African-Americans, Native Americans, women and other groups who believed they were being discriminated against, were protesting for equal treatment. This is when the government has consistently stepped in and expanded aid. Once these relief programs take affect and the population is pacified, welfare rolls are reduced, but not completely terminated and the conflict subsides

These conflicts can be explained by using the Conflict Theory. Social conflicts take place when groups of people are unable to gain satisfaction by going through the standard channels of communication to have their grievances acknowledged and acted upon. Conflicts can arise from the imbalance of power that one group holds over another, whether racial, economic or class. From these conflicts, civil disorder such as marches, riots and demonstrations can arise, requiring action to be taken to alleviate enough of the distress to quiet the masses, even if only temporarily.

During periods when a large majority of the population demands relief of some type, the stigma's associated with being poor are done away with, if only briefly. “Long periods of restrictiveness are interrupted periodically by short periods of liberalization” (Piven, 1971:34).

The poor have been stigmatized with negative labels throughout history that describe their condition as: vagrants, bums, tramps, hobos, drifters, loiter and homeless. There are labels that describe the type of person who would accept welfare: lazy, deviant, derelict, worthless, delinquent, immoral and unfit. There are also ethnic labels. Each label that is given to an individual carries with it the stigma of being less worthy and separate.

These stigmas are also used to keep conflict going between different groups of people. Racial conflict between poor whites, blacks and Hispanics enable capitalism to remain intact. These people are experiencing some of the same problems when dealing with poverty, but if their focus is being kept on race, they are not working together to find solutions. They could work together to see that minimum wages set at above poverty levels and that people working minimum wage jobs can be assured of adequate health care.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

-History

In the nineteenth century, the major thrust of welfare policy was to control pauperism. There was a difference in being a pauper and being poor. Pauperism was the consequence of wrong moral choices. "They were outcasts and considered no different from the criminal class. The dividing line between the poor and the paupers was the ability and willingness to work. Those who appeared capable of supporting themselves, but failed to do so, crossed the line from poverty to pauperism"(Handler, 1972:7).

In the early twentieth century, the deserving poor, considered poor through no fault of their own, were given assistance when states established pensions for the blind, the aged, and widows. These were considered poor through no fault of their own. The relief that these programs provided was at the discretion of local officials. The assistance provided by these local charities fell far short of the expected need.

According to Piven (1971:49), from spring 1920, to spring 1933, unemployment soared from 3 million to 15 million. From the labor statistics published by the U.S. Census Bureau, there were no numbers provided for the civilian labor force provided prior to 1929, but there were from 1929 to the present. **(Table 1)** In 1930, there were roughly 49,820,000 in the civilian labor force 14 years old and older, with roughly 4,340,000 on the unemployment roles. By 1933, there were roughly 51,590,000 in the civilian labor force 14 years old and older, with roughly 12,830,000 on the unemployment roles. People who still had jobs had to take a reduction in pay and hours, so that wages fell by one third.

Table 1**Unemployment in Civilian Population in United States**

Yearly totals are provided for periods of time when significant events were taking place. Otherwise, they are provided every five years.)

Year	Civilian Labor Force	Unemployed	Percent of Labor force
14 yrs. Old & Over			
1930	49,180,000	4,340,000	8.7
1931	50,420,000	8,020,000	15.9
1932	51,000,000	12,060,000	23.6
1933	51,590,000	12,830,000	24.9
1934	52,230,000	11,340,000	21.7
1935	52,870,000	10,610,000	20.1
1936	53,440,000	9,030,000	16.9
1937	54,000,000	7,700,000	14.3
1938	54,610,000	10,390,000	19.0
1939	55,230,000	9,480,000	17.2
1940	55,640,000	8,120,000	14.6
1945	53,860,000	1,040,000	1.9
16 yrs. Old & Over			
1950	62,208,000	3,288,000	5.3
1955	65,023,000	2,852,000	4.4
1960	69,628,000	3,852,000	5.5
1965	74,455,000	3,366,000	4.5
1970	82,771,000	4,093,000	4.9
1975	93,775,000	7,929,000	8.5
1980	106,940,000	7,637,000	7.1
1981	108,670,000	8,273,000	7.6
1982	110,204,000	10,678,000	9.7
1983	111,550,000	10,717,000	9.6
1984	113,544,000	8,539,000	7.5
1985	115,461,000	8,312,000	7.2
1990	125,840,000	7,047,000	5.6
1995	132,304,000	7,404,000	5.6
1996	133,943,000	7,236,000	5.4
2000	142,583,000	5,692,000	4.0
2002	144,863,000	8,378,000	5.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2003.

When unemployment began to rise in the late 1920's, people were led to believe that it was temporary and local relief could take care of the needs of the deserving poor. Once the depression took hold in the 1930's, these local efforts were all that was available. According to Piven (1971:3), early relief efforts were designed to aid during mass unemployment, with the assumption being that once the economy became more stable there would be less need for assistance. It also functioned as an aid to people who were exempt from the roll of worker like the elderly, the disabled, the mentally ill or anyone who was unemployed.

In an attempt to aid in recovery, Democratic leaders overrode a veto by President Hoover to push through the Emergency Relief Act of 1932. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation was then formed with \$300 million dollars to supplement local relief funds. This money was in the form of loans which had to be repaid, with interest, by 1935. There were about 12 million people out of work and near starvation at the time and yet states were reluctant to take the loans. By the end of the first year, only \$30 million dollars had been borrowed. This may have been because the state leaders were loyal to Hoover or because they were worried about the repayment of the loans in such a short period of time, but for whatever the reasons, mass disorder was about to arise.

Without work, society began to collapse. Families lost their homes, farmers lost their land and men left their families because they were unable to support them. People began to see their poverty not as a stigma of their character, but as a fate that was engulfing the whole country.

Social unrest and agitation became the order of the day. Armies of men demanding help besieged relief organizations. Social workers were made so fearful by these direct assaults that they gave the people what they wanted with no questions asked. Socialist and Communist groups led marches and riots in the larger cities like

Chicago, New York and Detroit. In Chicago, there were rent riots where unemployed blacks were evicted from their homes. Communist Party members led groups of as many as a hundred men in physically returning evicted families back to their apartments or houses. This often led to beatings, arrests and even death, but it helped force relief organizations to help the poor with their rent payments. The country was on the verge of a revolution. These conflicts led the government to take action.

In 1928, Governor Roosevelt of New York introduced social reforms including tax relief for farmers and public development of electric power. In 1931, he established an emergency program that supplemented local relief funds with an initial 20 million dollars. By 1932, twenty four states were following his example and providing some form of financial assistance for relief.

This idea was Roosevelt's ticket to the White House. Once voters in counties overrun with unemployment heard about his ideas for the New Deal, like assistance for farmers, for industry and guaranteed wages, his election was assured. The Roosevelt Administration launched a campaign to deal with different facets of the economic breakdown that was taking place all over the country. Farmers were assisted by the Agricultural Adjustment Act that created cheap credit and inflated currency. It also took land out of cultivation causing land prices to rise. Tenant farmers and sharecroppers were left out of the economy. Businesses and organized labor benefited from the National Industrial Recovery Act that allowed businesses to limit production and fix prices if they conceded to labor codes governing wages and hours and recognized the right of collective bargaining. This action helped put people back to work, but did nothing for the undeserving poor like women and minorities. By 1935, 30 percent of the black population was on relief.

There were mixed reactions to aid during the depression. Some men lived by the

Puritan Ethic towards work. A man wasn't worth anything if he couldn't work and take care of his family and he would rather die than ask for charity. Others saw the government as having a moral Christian responsibility to help citizens in times of distress. They believed that everyone had the right to food and shelter.

Faced with major social unrest and the possibility of a revolution, Roosevelt initiated the New Deal and saved capitalism in the process. By the time Roosevelt took office in March of 1933, there were no banks open in the country. He immediately signed the Emergency Banking Act and change took place quickly after that. One act after another was being signed, with little resistance from Congress. He had no ties with supporters who would have expected favors in return for their support, so he was able to have free reign.

According to Cammisa (1996:46), when the Social Security Act was amended in 1939 to include wives, widows and dependents, these women were able to leave ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) and move to the more socially acceptable Social Security Insurance. The undeserving poor left on ADC were divorced, deserted or never married mothers. This included women whose husbands were in jobs not accepted by the amended social security act like personal services workers, farmers and minorities. Once this occurred, women receiving ADC were stigmatized as the undeserving poor. ADC became equated with the stigma of immorality, unmarried baby breeders, loafers and drunks. These women were prohibited from living with men who were not their husbands and if they married, they lost their benefits.

ADC was criticized for discouraging marriage and encouraging desertion. During a time when many Americans' were unemployed, the idea of marriage for women receiving aid was undesirable. The loss of what little support they received would have increased their poverty. Desertion was one way a husband could be sure his family did

not starve, since men were not eligible for ADC. If he left the family, they would be able to gain support from local relief organizations.

According to Piven (1971:214), in less than thirty years, twenty million Americans left the land. The difference between the migration of the white population and the black was location. Whites tended to move toward villages, towns, and small cities, often within the same state or county. Blacks tended to move north, to the larger cities in hopes of finding factory jobs. The pay was higher in the north and there were more benefits for black families. Those who were not eligible for relief in the south, were in the north with fewer restrictions.

With the depression came mass migration. The changes in rural America produced dislocated workers. Farmers, some on the same farm for generations, had to leave their homes, their communities, and the only way of life they had ever known. They became a part “of a labor supply to be drawn upon by a changing labor market. As the history of Western market systems shows, however, people do not adapt so readily to dramatically altered methods of work and to the new alien patterns of social life dictated by that work.... The process of human adjustment to these economic changes has ordinarily entailed generations of mass unemployment, distress, and disorganization” (Piven, 1971:6)

By the mid 1940's, when the economy was in better shape, conflicts died down. Programs that had been implemented during Roosevelt's presidency were dismantled or scaled down. There was no depression, jobs were becoming more plentiful and there was no longer the threat of civil uprisings. The poverty that existed was not as visible at the time or society was just not taking notice.

However, in the mid 1950's, when the United States economy was booming, compared to just ten years earlier, people began to realize that there was still poverty in

a country that had so much. This was especially true in the Appalachian mountain ranges and for black families moving from the south to large urban areas. It was fitting, therefore, that in the late 1950's, Kennedy's presidential campaign focused on poverty, unemployment and hunger. Kennedy, much like Roosevelt in his time, saw an opportunity that would help the poor as well as help his chances of becoming president. Roosevelt created programs to help the unemployed white male voter during a time when unemployment had skyrocketed and a depression was setting in. Kennedy, saw the plight of millions of blacks that were living in highly populated urban areas in the north as well as the rural and Appalachian poor. He promised the black voter that he would deal with civil rights and poverty if they would vote for him. The country as a whole was not under duress due to unemployment, but there were large pockets of poverty with civil unrest that required the expansion of aid.

It was slow going in the early 60's, but with the number of black voters increasing, more concessions were being made. They did not happen all at once though. Municipal governments were not willing to meet some of the demands of the black population, like halting urban renewal, integrating schools, and opening access to white neighborhoods, because they would have lost many of their wealthy white constituents. Instead of being given concessions, they were given more relief benefits.

President John F. Kennedy owed his election to the black inner city vote. The slim margin by which he won would not have happened without the black vote. The first two years he did little to keep the promises he had made to these voters. If he wanted to stay in office, he had to find some way of gaining more black supporters without alienating the white vote.

Kennedy's administration was responsible for the implementation of the Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act of 1961, to prevent and treat juvenile

delinquency. He also implemented the Community Mental Health Center Act of 1963 to establish mental health care in the cities. This was the last Act he implemented as president. Upon Kennedy's death, Johnson took office and immediately declared "War on Poverty".

"One of the main differences in the War on Poverty and the New Deal was that President Johnson was attempting to eradicate poverty during an economic boom, whereas many of President Roosevelt's programs were temporary solutions to a temporary crisis". However, they had one thing in common; they were both dealing with social unrest and conflict. Roosevelt had the rapidly escalating number of unemployed, whereas Johnson had the civil rights, women's rights and the antiwar movements to deal with. (Cammisa, 1998:53)

According to Levitan (1985:19), before the Great Society, most government aid to the poor came from state and local levels. There were a few federal social programs with limited budgets. The federal government did however, provide matching budgets for programs like vocational education, but the administration of the programs was left to the states.

Poverty was defined in 1963, when Molly Orshansky, an economist with the Social Security Administration under President Johnson, developed a formula that would determine what was considered an adequate need. Ms. Orshansky developed this only as a research tool, but the government adopted it as its major means of identifying who is eligible for welfare. The government considers anyone below the poverty line as the deserving poor and anyone above it as the undeserving poor.

In the mid 60's, welfare rights became a national issue. Groups like "social workers, church men, lawyers, civic organizations, public welfare employees, civil rights organizations, settlement houses and family agencies" started speaking out. "This

upsurge of pressure was largely stimulated by the federal government through its Great Society programs” (Piven, 1971:248)

Once Johnson became President, he was able to get his welfare policies passed with little interference from Congress. They were passed through as a memorial to President Kennedy with minimal Amendments, even fewer than Roosevelt’s New Deal.

Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society represented a substantial commitment to relief and the elimination of poverty. Many of the initiatives of the late 1960 sent funding directly to public and private groups “like private social service agencies, universities, and new ghetto agencies” (Piven, 1971: 262). The fear was that if funds were funneled through the hands of white political leaders, the black population would not benefit from them. President Johnson also made sure that the funds for the programs he initiated were renewed before he left office.

A great deal of controversy was created by the “section of the Economic Opportunities Act that called for ‘maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served.’ “(Piven, 1971:265). Not that they had a problem with ‘token’ employees, the problem was with the groups using some of the funds they received to directly harass city agencies. Housing Agencies were badgered to inspect slums and people were organizing to picket Public Welfare Agencies. Some of these social conflicts caused officials to act, whether they wanted to or not. People were not idly setting by and letting the officials run things as they saw fit any longer.

Johnson’s Great Society brought positive and negative feedback, but the critics appeared in agreement when it came to the cost. It was tough to remediate poverty and wage a costly war simultaneously. Everyone agreed that it was too expensive. While his plan was to help those in poverty, while attempting to build a way out for future generations, law makers did not want to allocate that much spending for the poor.

Nixon was the next President to bring the issue of welfare to the table, causing a negative reaction by congress. He suggests that even though there is a link between laziness and poverty, most unemployed people are simply not employable. This can be due to a handicap, childcare issues or lack of suitable job opportunities. Illness and family responsibilities are the number one barriers for the non-working poor. He believed that welfare broke up families and discouraged work. He suggested a plan that would end welfare by creating a guaranteed minimum annual income for all families. This was referred to as the FAP (Family Assistance Plan). If a family did not meet the minimum income at tax time, they would receive a guaranteed federal refund for the difference. Neither side of congress would agree, and the plan failed to pass. Some said the minimum amount of \$1,600. was too low, some said it was too high and others said that it sounded too much like a socialist idea.

In 1972, Congress agreed to a general revenue sharing program where \$6 billion dollars a year was distributed to state and local government with minimal federal influence on how it was distributed. In 1973, Congress rejected the revenue sharing plan and replaced it with a plan that would create a federal, state and local partnership. The federal government's faith in the abilities of state and local government was waning. They believed that the poor could best be served if they had a hand in it.

According to Collins, in the late 1970's, televangelists and talk show hosts were verbally attacking liberal sympathizers. The media, educational establishment, foundations, federal and state bureaucracies, and a permanent welfare constituency began blaming the welfare state for the country's moral decay, crime, teen pregnancy, and poor economic growth. By 1980, these groups had enabled Ronald Reagan to gain the Presidency and gained a tool for dismantling welfare through the reallocation of federal budget dollars, tax reform, deregulation, and monetary policy that began during

the Carter administration.

Reagan's supply-side economics theory suggested that if large corporations were given tax break incentives, they would invest their savings in new business ventures, stimulating economic growth, reducing inflation, creating jobs and balancing the budget. The wealth at the top would "trickle down" to the bottom.

At the same time, services for the poor were being cut, including "unemployment insurance, libraries, mass transit, education, recreation, and park maintenance.... Some welfare state programs were dismantled through regulatory changes that declared numbers of people ineligible for entitlements" (Collins, 1996:111).

Lowering taxes and allowing large corporations to keep more of their profits did not create more jobs for the poor. The money was used to build factories in Third World countries where labor was cheap and there were few, if any, regulations. Factories in the United States closed or downsized, causing massive unemployment.

In the 1980's, unemployment was up to 9.7 percent (**Table 1**) and according to Collins (1996:112), incomes for the poorest population were down, causing a recession not seen by this country since the Great Depression. Not only were jobs lost, but, federal subsidies for low-income housing were cut by 75 percent. This created the fiercest wave of homelessness in this country since the Depression, but there was no civil unrest. Family income for the poorest 20 percent of the population dropped by 12 percent while going up as much as 136 percent for the richest 1 percent.

With the loss of tax revenues, the federal treasury lost an estimated \$500 billion dollars. "Coupled with a ballooning military budget, escalating health care costs, and deregulation of the savings and loan industry (estimated to have cost as much as \$1.4 trillion) sent the federal deficit through the roof." As a result, the U.S. government had to borrow massive amounts of money from large foreign investors and from the "Social

Security Trust Fund, to meet general operating costs.... In one decade, the United States had gone from being the world's largest creditor to being the world's largest debtor" (Collins, 1996:111)

As a former Governor, Reagan claimed that state and local officials were better suited to understand the needs of their own states and community's need, than the federal government was. So, his administration pushed for the decentralization of federal social programs.

When President Bill Clinton took office, welfare was destined to go through another radical change. When contemplating the effects of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, "the Congressional Budget Office had reported that the legislation would cut welfare rolls by about 30 to 40 percent. Stricter eligibility for Supplemental Security Income would cost about 300,000 children their benefits. New rules would dump about 500,000 legal immigrants from SSI. There was no money for direct job creation or education, and the bill substituted rapid job placement for training. Its sponsors wanted more public assistance recipients into work - any paid work - as quickly as possible. At best, welfare reform would force recipients into low wage, low skill jobs that offered little prospect for mobility. If most welfare recipients were put to work, they would flood the low skilled labor market and depress wages further" (Katz, 1996:331).

According to Hancock, Clinton's "reform act was not a piece of legislation meant to tame class warfare or balance the budget. Money was not the point. Welfare spending on families with children represented less than 1 percent of the national budget. Nor was social order an immediate concern. Instead, the new law was driven by old ideas, reflections of the philosophy that welfare perpetuates the poverty it is meant to relieve.... Once again, poor individuals were ultimately held responsible for their own

deprivation” (Hancock, 2002:7)

The number of people receiving assistance fell by 50 percent the first four years of its existence. According to Leisner (1997), one of the reasons that welfare rolls are declining is that immigrants who come into our country to work are barred from receiving welfare and legal immigrants are barred for the first five years. Once the five years is up, it's up to the state if they want to serve them or not.

The federal government turned welfare over to the states with few federal guidelines. The 1996 law offers States great flexibility in designing individual State TANF Programs with little interference from the federal government. Unless expressly provided under the statutes, the Federal Government may not regulate the conduct of States. All 50 States as well as numerous Native American Reservations have the freedom to distribute TANF funds in any manner reasonably calculated to accomplish the purpose of TANF. The purposes are: assisting needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes; and reducing dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage, preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families” (Overview, 2003:198).

Statistical and theoretical information that has been made available to law makers and the public for determining who the deserving and undeserving poor are, can be misleading. One reason for this is “while most poor people are rural and white, the poor areas closest to the centers of education are disproportionately African American and Latino urban neighborhoods. Rural poverty is more diffuse and usually hidden from the academic centers” (Collins, 1996:60).

Families in rural poverty have less access to many types of assistance, such as: childcare, mass transit, post-secondary education and jobs (including low wage labor

jobs). They are also less likely to have a voice in decisions that are made on their behalf by lawmakers.

Handler wrote “the cause of the problem has been too many people on relief who are assumed able to earn enough to support themselves and their families. The solution... is to increase the conditions of welfare so that applicants and recipients who can work will work.... Welfare has always been conditional. In order to live, those who do not earn must do things not required of those who do earn....” (Handler, 1972:2)

The conditions that are put on welfare are society’s conditions, derived from years of deeply embedded moral and social beliefs. By living in a capitalist society, few are excused from their role as laborer or provider. Our way of life centers on wages and property. If individuals are unable to contribute to society by performing some type of labor and paying taxes, they are considered a liability, they are the undeserving poor.

Katz states, “Most extreme poverty arises from economic and social forces, from sickness and disability, or from childhood and old age, but not from character. No sharp line divides the very poor from the rest of us; the distinction between the worthy and unworthy poor always has been a convenient but distinctive fiction” (Katz, 1996:333-334).

-Feminization of Poverty

Diana Pearce coined the term “feminization of poverty”. She noted that poverty was becoming more of a female problem than a male and that two-thirds of the poor over the age of 16 were women. The reason that poverty for women has been a struggle to overcome is the wage gap that has existed between men and women in the same jobs. One of the reasons for this could be the long history of people thinking that the work women do is less important than the work men do. “According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, women make up two-thirds of all minimum wage earners, and during 1998, women in the United States earned 76 cents for every dollar earned by men” (Lips, 1999).

Prior the 1940's, it was assumed that mothers were supposed to stay home with their children. This assumption was used to support the initial AFDC programs. In actuality, only widows were privileged enough to stay home and be considered blameless for their poverty, the deserving poor. According to Levitan (1985:7), the person who decided who was deserving or undeserving was usually the local county court judge. They decided who would and would not be required to work. All others, especially those who were not white, or those with a tarnished reputation, were required to work, find another means of support, give up their children or have their children taken away from them.

Within the past thirty years, a single mother receiving welfare benefits was not allowed to have men in her home. Caseworkers would go so far as to stake out and raid the home at night if there was the suspicion that a man was there. If a man was found, the mother lost her families benefits. It was even possible for her to lose her children, if she was deemed unfit.

According to the Census Bureaus statistics on men and women living below the

poverty level (**Table 2**), between the 1970 Census and the 2000 Census, more women were still living below the poverty level than men. The population of the United States has increased by over 76 million people and the rate of poverty was lower for both men and women since 1970, but it is still clear that poverty is a female problem.

In the 1960's, women started speaking out against unfair hiring practices, lower wages for women than for men and being stereotyped as belonging in certain jobs. Women were protesting and working together to make changes. This conflict enabled the implementation of the 1963 Equal Pay Act which outlawed, in most cases, different pay scales for men and women holding the same job. However, the Act did not open up traditional male jobs for women as hoped.

According to the (CPS) Current Population Survey (**Table 3**), the percent of women in the civilian labor force moved over the 50 percent mark in 1980 to 51.5 percent. This is one reason we cannot expect the marriage incentive to be of major importance. Over half of today's workforce are women. They are still 50 percent more likely to live in poverty, but a few dollars extra in welfare benefits, that are supposed to run out in 5 years, is not reason enough for a woman to marry.

As early as the 1980's, women headed about half of all poor families. According to Levitan (1985:14), female headed households are much more likely to be dependent on welfare with little hope of finding a job that can support, much less lift their families out of poverty. Females working at low wage jobs with little prospects of earning more, headed virtually half of all black families at that time.

Glesserster suggests that in order for the modern day family to keep above poverty, married women have to not only work, but also work longer hours. With two parent incomes, families are generally able to live comfortably. However, "single women with children on welfare could not increase their income significantly by entering the

labor market and did not do so. So we see rising poverty levels and a sharp increase in the participation of married women in the labor force, but not in the incomes of single women on welfare” (Glasserster, 2002:93).

“The changes in poverty rates and sex differences in poverty have occurred in two major periods, from 1950 to 1970 and from 1970 to 1996. In the decade after World War II, poverty rates declined dramatically.... As poverty rates declined, the sex-poverty ratio increased for all groups. The growing inequality in men and women’s poverty rates was caused by several factors. First, the wage growth that pushed poverty rates down benefited men more than women, because they were more closely attached to the labor market. Second, changes in family structure hurt women more than men, mainly because women bore more responsibility for children in the growing number of unmarried households” (McLanahan, 12)

According to McLanahan, women’s wages have been gaining on men’s over the last fifteen years, reversing the feminization of poverty. This does not take into account that even if women’s wages are gaining on men’s, if they are single parents, they have more responsibilities and more expenses. There is still a much higher percent of single mothers with children in the home than there are single fathers with children in their home.

Table 2

Families in poverty:

(According to the Census Bureau, the Census did not measure poverty before 1960, so the first record was not available until 1967.)

Year	Total Population in U.S.	% Men Below Poverty	% Women Below Poverty
1970	202,489,000	11.1	14.0
1980	225,027,000	11.2	14.7
1990	248,644,000	11.7	15.2
2000	278,944,000	9.9	12.6

(U.S. Census Bureau, Poverty of People, by Sex: 1966 to 2002: 2003)

Table 3

Female Participation in Civilian Labor Force

(Includes married and single females from the Current Population Survey)

Year	Total	Percent
1940	13,840,000	27.9
1950	17,795,000	31.4
1960	23,240,000	37.7
1970	31,543,000	43.3
1980	45,487,000	51.5
1990	56,829,000	57.5
2000	66,303,000	59.9

(U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2003)

Chapter 3

Summary and Conclusion

Once the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act” was put into effect in 1996 by President Clinton, welfare was no longer guaranteed to the poor. In a look back over the history of welfare in the United States, it did not begin as a guarantee. It has gone through constant change since it began officially with President Roosevelt’s “New Deal”

Not all poor were guaranteed welfare, even during the great depression. There were categories of deserving and undeserving poor from the beginning. Initially, the deserving poor were people who were impoverished as a consequence of old age, mental illness, physical illness, and blindness or widowed and orphaned. The undeserving poor were largely people able to work, but did not and minorities. The civil unrest of The Great Depression did bring about changes that helped many, but there were also many being discriminated against.

ADC(Aid to Dependent Children), was created in the original Social Security Act. It was for widows and orphans, divorced, deserted or never married mothers. The Social Security Act was amended in 1939 to include wives, widows and dependents. This took away the stigma attached to welfare from these recipients, but made it harder on the divorced, deserted, or never married women with children, left on ADC. They were then considered the undeserving poor, while the ones shifted to Social Security were considered the deserving poor.

During the depression, a great migration took place next with millions of families leaving the farms they had lived on and worked for generations. This included the tenant farmers, sharecroppers and many blacks who had remained after slavery was abolished.

Once the Depression Era ended and the economy was more stable, welfare programs were either dismantled or their budgets were cut. The idea returned that everyone should be able to find a job and work their way out of poverty returned.

In the mid 1950's when the economy was booming, people started to notice that there were still poor people in this land of plenty. Then, Presidential hopeful, John F. Kennedy, started campaigning and using the plight of the poor blacks in over populated areas as his focus. He promised to deal with civil rights and poverty if elected. He was elected, thanks to the black vote, but fulfilled few of his promises to them. Once he saw that he would need these same people if he wanted to remain in office another four years, he began an earnest campaign to fight poverty.

There was civil unrest into the 1960's with Civil Rights, Women's Rights and Welfare Rights protests. As with the Great Depression, with civil unrest comes change. More people are perceived as deserving and the stigmas are once again lifted, albeit temporarily. Welfare was once again expanded.

In the early 1970's, President Nixon proposed a radical end to welfare by creating a plan that would guarantee a minimum annual income to all families. Congress rejected the plan summarily.

In the late 1970's, when the economy was not in dire straits and there was a substantial number of people on the welfare roles, the poor became the targets of Televangelists, talk show hosts, the media, educational establishments and federal and state bureaucracies, to name but a few. The welfare state was being portrayed as the cause of all the ills in society. The poor were being held responsible for all the problems of society at the time. These welfare bashers were responsible in a large part for Ronald Reagan's Presidency.

There were no major economic or social distresses at the time, so the poor were

being placed in the undeserving category again.

Reagan's supply-side theory, designed to give the rich more and the poor less to stimulate the economy, caused the worst economic disaster since the Great Depression. The rich, it was believed, were going to be able to keep more of their profits and the benefits of their investments would trickle down to the poor. While these businesses were getting huge tax breaks, the poor were bringing home less money, factories were closing and moving to other countries and services for the poor like unemployment insurance, mass transit, education and parks and recreation were being cut. In addition, federal subsidies for low income housing were cut by 75 percent, causing homelessness. The United States went from being the world's largest creditor to its largest debtor nation.

The last major restructuring of welfare in the century came with President Bill Clinton. The goal was to cut welfare rolls, create stricter rules for Supplemental Security Income recipients (*vis-à-vis*). The poor would no longer be entitled to assistance from the government and were made the main focus of the Administration along with balancing the budget. Clinton accomplished both. The welfare roles were cut by 50 percent in the first four years.

According to Cammise (1998:25), throughout the history of welfare in the United States, there have been constant debates over the agent responsible for poverty. Is it the individual or is it the structure of society? If poverty is an individual problem, then the government should provide limited assistance while encouraging individual to work their way out of poverty. If poverty is the fault of society as a whole, then it is the states or a collective responsibility to care for people who have fallen on hard times. Another debate is over who is deserving of aid. Society has attempted to place the poor in the categories of the truly needy and those who are able to care for themselves. This also

requires debate as to where the line is to be drawn and who will draw it.

History has proven time and time again that the current condition of the population at large plays the biggest part in determining the answer to these questions. If there is a depression, a recession, high unemployment or civil unrest, where a large majority of the population is struggling, then policy making will be in favor of the poor. More people will be considered part of the category of the deserving poor. Fewer will be considered the undeserving, but only for a time.

Presidents Roosevelt, Kennedy and Johnson were the national leaders in helping the poor. Roosevelt and Kennedy were elected into office by the poor who were struggling because of unemployment and unequal treatment of its citizens. There was social unrest, because of unemployment and the depression during Roosevelt's era. There was civil unrest because of the unfair treatment of minorities and women when Kennedy was elected and the majority of the poor and discriminated were considered deserving. The Johnson Administration's anti poverty legislation was arguably more intensive than Roosevelt's New Deal, but he did not have enough support backing him to be successful.

Presidents Reagan and Clinton were the national leaders in minimizing assistance to the poor. Reagan's election was due to the media and bureaucrat's constant criticism of the poor by blaming them for all that was wrong with the country. Clinton won by promising to end welfare as we know it and to balance the budget. There was no social unrest or major problems with the economy prior to their elections and the majority of the poor were considered undeserving by the average tax payer.

The original goal of welfare, or relief, was to aid widows and orphans. Progressively, it has moved on to aiding single female headed households whether widowed, divorced or never married. The number of poor single parent, female-headed

households has continually climbed since the 1950's. Previously, morals, class and racial issues were tools in determining if a family was worthy of the governmental help. Now, each state has again, the power to determine who is, or is not deserving.

Currently, these factors do not have as much affect as simply being poor and out of work does. When TANF was enacted in 1996, one of the main objectives was to bring back family values, to try and re-establish the nuclear, two-parent family. The belief was, and still is under the Bush administration, that if women will all get married, poverty will cease to exist in the country, or at least be less visible.

To try and re-establish the two parent family after fifty years of declining marriage success rates and expect it to save the poor population is not rational. However, as states like West Virginia offer an extra \$100 per month as a marriage incentive, there will probably be more marriages, at least until their lifetime benefits run out.

From Colonial times to the 1960's the federal government gradually assumed more responsibility for welfare, while states administered the programs. Since the 1980's, the states have been given more of the responsibility. The funding still comes from the federal government, but states again are given more latitude in how they use it. Prior to PRWORA, states had to provide benefits to qualified recipients past the federal funding. With the closed ended block grants, states can be forced to cut benefits. There are still some states that will provide additional funding even after federal money runs out and the five year time limit has expired. However, there are few states that will extend these benefits.

The conclusion is that there will continue to be periods of time of forgetting the deserving poor and ignoring the undeserving poor, except during periods of civil unrest when conflicts arise through citizen unrest. Even if the United States were to go through another period such as the Great Depression, where relief for the poor was of

the utmost importance, if the future repeats the past century, the relief will only be temporary.

Recommendations

Recommended future research would include:

- A comparison of the United States social welfare history and policies, with that of other leading nations.
- A more in-depth look at the rural poor, especially in the Appalachian Mountains where there remain significant pockets of poverty.
- What are the consequences of the feminization of poverty on children?

Glossary

Absolute Poverty - is a lack of resources necessary to meet one's basic needs. Their income is less than the amount needed to purchase minimum needs of food, shelter and clothing.

AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) - was enacted as part of the Social Security Act of 1935 to provide for the needs of poor children in single parent households. It was intended as a temporary program to help widows with small children. It provided cash grants to families with children who meet certain income and other requirements. The state had to contribute a specific sum of money for the program in addition to what the federal government contributed. AFDC, which was a categorical grant program, has been replaced by the TANF block grant under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act.

CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) - was an agency created in the New Deal to relieve unemployment for men during the Great Depression. Approximately 3 million men worked for CCC during its existence between 1933 and 1942. The work included: soil conservation, tree planting, small dam construction, forest clearing and irrigation projects.

EA (Emergency Assistance) - a program used to "assist individuals and families in meeting a financial crises, when they are without available resources. The program is designed to provide short-term emergency financial assistance with which eligible individuals and families may obtain items or services needed to eliminate an emergency

or crisis. Items of need include rent, utilities, food, household supplies, clothing, transportation and medical service. Assistance is limited to one 30 consecutive day period during any 12 consecutive months” (West Virginia).

EOA (Economic Opportunities Act) of 1964 - part of the War on Poverty, created job opportunities through job training, work-study, community action and training volunteers for the war on poverty. Loans and guarantees were also made available

FERA (Federal Emergency Relief Act) - was initiated on May 12, 1933, as part of the New Deal. It provided aid to the needy and unemployed. These funds were given directly to the states to distribute as they thought best. Once The Social Security Act of 1935 was passed, the FERA was discontinued.

FSA (Family Support Act) - was passed by congress in 1988.”The anchor principle of FSA is that parents - both father and mother - should be the primary supporters of their children and that, for many people, public assistance should be coupled with encouragement, supports, and requirements to aid them in moving from welfare to take jobs and participate in employment services....” (Gueron, 1991:1)

JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Act) - was instituted by the Family Support Act of 1988 “as a job training program. The JOBS program was expected to greatly reduce the number of people on welfare and to encourage work among welfare recipients” (Cammisa, 1998:57-58).

PRWORA (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act) of 1996 - was designed to move people to work and reduce dependency rather than provide income. It changed policy as well as the welfare services system.

Relative Poverty - is the possession of a level of resources that is less than the level of resources possessed by the average person.

Social Security Act - was created in 1935 as part of the New Deal. Originally it covered only the aged who worked in select occupations and benefits did not begin until 1942. The 1939 Amendment expanded benefits to the male breadwinner's family, including his wife, or upon his death, his widow and surviving dependents.

SSI (Supplemental Security Income) - established in 1972, combined former federal grants to states for the needy, aged, blind and disabled, into one means tested program with indexed benefits. During the 1990's, SSI was reformed to aid children with only the most serious disabilities.

TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) - was created by The Welfare Reform Law of 1996, became effective, July 1, 1997. It is the block grant that replaces the AFDC, EA and JOBS program. TANF, as created in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), ends the entitlement status of welfare, creating a lifetime limit of five years for receipt of benefits, and requires recipients to work within two years using the "work first" approach.

The Great Depression - lasted from 1929 until 1940. This was a period of economic failure following the Stock Market Crash of 1929. Homes, farms and savings were lost. Incomes declined or were lost and thousands of banks went bankrupt.

WPA (Works Progress Administration) - established on May 6, 1935, was a massive employment relief program with the goal of putting the unemployed back to work in jobs that would serve the public good and conserve the skills and self esteem of workers. These work projects ranged from construction the fine arts.

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