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REFORMING WELFARE REFORM POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY: TWO STATE CASE STUDIES IN POLITICAL CULTURE, ORGANIZING, AND ADVOCACY

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Welfare reform had the unforeseen effect of causing large numbers of public assistance recipients to drop out of college, discouraging their pursuit and acquisition of postsecondary education (PSE) credentials. There is a growing body of research that shows the value of postsecondary education in getting public assistance recipients onto a path toward occupational and social mobility. The restrictions of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families PSE policy, coupled with the recognition that college participation should be an option for qualified welfare recipients, influenced the emergence of many successful state and county-level movements focused on reforming welfare reform PSE policy. Their work provides the few contemporary examples of civil society groups shaping welfare policy through advocacy and organizing. This article summarizes some of the issues and research on welfare and PSE, and chronicles the activities of TANF PSE reform movements in Maine and Kentucky. The case study conceptual framework draws upon Daniel Elazar's (1972; 1994) conception of political culture to provide historical, institutional, political and social context. Through documentation of how reform occurred in different states, the account provided may be useful to people interested in welfare reform and PSE, especially in regard to the lingering uncertainty of what will be the final provisions that constitute the reauthorization of welfare reform.

Keywords: *welfare reform, higher education, public assistance, welfare recipients, organizing, political culture*

Introduction

During 1995–96, more than 650,000 welfare recipients were enrolled in postsecondary education (Department of Education, 1999). The total is likely far greater than this since many colleges and universities do not identify their public assistance-receiving students, and some students prefer not to be identified as welfare recipients. By 1999, however, the number these students had been nearly halved, declining to almost 358,000 (Department of Education, 1999). This pattern materialized across the country. For instance, the City University of New York (CUNY) saw its enrollment of public assistance recipients plummet from 27,000 in 1996–97 to less than 10,000 by 2000 (CUNY Office of Institutional Data, 2001). What caused such a precipitous decline in the participation of public assistance recipients in postsecondary education (PSE)?

Welfare reform was the reason that so many public assistance recipients were leaving college. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), also known as welfare reform, marked the end of welfare as an entitlement. PRWORA mandated a new form of block grant-structured assistance, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), that put, among other things, maximum limits on receipt of assistance and participation in PSE. Assistance was restricted to a lifetime maximum of 60 months, and participation in PSE limited to one year of vocational education. Most states interpreted TANF stringently, offering far less than the maximum limits.

The TANF proscription on higher education became another barrier to poor women's social and economic advancement. TANF's mandatory work requirements began at 20 hours in 1997 and incrementally increased to 35 hours in 2002 (the rules are slightly different for two parent families). For single parents, coordinating child care, course schedules, study time, attending mandatory meetings with social service agencies, and getting to a TANF work placement, meant that many were pushed beyond their capacity to cope with so many challenges. TANF's emphasis on labor force attachment embodied a view that any job is better than none, and that the poor need to learn discipline, workplace norms, and middle class behaviors and values, even

where recipients have work experience or desire education over work (Riemer, 1997). To further dampen participation in PSE, case workers unaware of the new rules often told recipients that they could not attend college at all if they wanted to continue receiving public assistance. Countless numbers of public assistance recipients ended up leaving school in order to maintain TANF, their primary source of income, health care, and child care. Combined, the TANF policies and welfare bureaucracy interpretations of the policies became the focus of reform movements, beginning as early as 1997 in Maine.

Recognition of TANF's chilling effect on higher education began soon after implementation of TANF. News reporters, often tipped off by college faculty or welfare advocates, provided coverage, albeit spotty. Stories were coming from places as disparate as Caspar, Wyoming (Rea, 1997), Boston, Massachusetts (Chacon, 1998), San Francisco, California (Irving, 1997), and Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Thompson, 1997). What was not being covered was the beginnings of resistance to the burdensome restrictions, as recipients and advocates began to organize and mobilize.

Research and Reform Context

This article chronicles and analyzes the reform of TANF higher education policy in Maine and Kentucky focusing on identifying the primary actors and detailing how change occurred. The author conducted most of the research and many of the interviews while the reform process was in motion or recently completed. Although the prospects of changing the laws in a conservative political climate seemed remote at the time, reform did occur. Ideally, activists, advocates, and researchers involved in improving the PSE dimensions of state welfare policy will find useful lessons in the abridged case studies below.

The initial research process involved identifying and interviewing the primary actors, and collecting documents such as bills and program literature in preparation for an Open Society-funded national conference on welfare reform and higher education (Price and Greene, 1999; Price 2000). We investigated nearly two dozen states, but concentrated on developing five in-depth state case studies. Maine, Kentucky, Wyoming, Illinois and

California were selected for expediency; they were among the first states where successful reform efforts occurred, and it was not difficult to obtain data in the form of interviews, drafts of legislative bills, state government documents, media reports, and college and welfare program publications. Also, these are among the few states where welfare bureaucracies and colleges track the number of people who receive public assistance and participate in higher education (other states include New York and Hawaii). Analysis of the state case studies determined that collaboration between different sectors of civil society was a central feature of all the successful reform efforts.

Higher Education as a Route to Social Mobility for Welfare Recipients

Welfare recipients have much to gain from acquiring higher education credentials. According to *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, the 1998 median earnings of a full-time worker with a bachelor's degree was $40,387, more than $15,000—or 61 percent—greater than that of a high school graduate (Crosby, 2001). Education beyond the bachelor's further enhances earning potential, although age plays a role in determining this outcome. Postsecondary education is likely to become more important to social mobility as the pace of technological change increases and affects the job prospects of ever larger numbers of Americans. The *Bureau of Labor Statistics* predict that the fastest growing occupations in the first decade of the twenty-first century will require at least an associate's degree (1999, p. 2).

Higher education is beneficial in other ways. The more education people have the less likely they are to experience unemployment. According to 1998 data, the unemployment rate for high school graduates was four percent compared to 1.9 percent for bachelor's degree holders (*Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, 1999). And the highest paying occupations typically require at least a bachelor's degree (although some occupations such as electrician or machinist pay well, but do not require a college degree). Minorities and women, whose earnings and income continue to lag behind those of Whites and men, find higher education to be one of the most reliable means for improving their socio-economic position. Black women, for instance, profit greatly as a result of

additional schooling (Mizzell, 2000). Black women with a high school degree earned $365 per week in 1998, in contrast to those with a bachelor's degree who earned $605 (*Current Population Survey Annual Demographic Supplement*, 1998). Higher education, especially a liberal arts education, increases human capital formation by amplifying cognitive, verbal, and mathematical capacities, and by positively influencing attitudes, values, and behaviors in ways that make for a broadly educated citizenry (Pandey, Zhan, Neeley-Barnes, & Menon, 2000, pp. 110–111).

An early study of welfare recipients and higher education demonstrated that all of the study participants who acquired bachelor's degrees completely ended their welfare dependency, while 81 percent of associate degree holders did the same (Gittell, Schehl, & Fareri, 1990). In a related study of 840 recipients in five states, the findings made clear that while an associate degree enhances the earning power of welfare recipients, it is a bachelor's degree that provides the greatest economic independence (Gittell, Gross, & Holdaway, 1993). Prior to welfare reform, one study estimated that approximately 27% of welfare recipients were capable of immediately entering bachelor degree programs, and another third could, with one semester of remediation, enter associate degree programs (Carnevale & Desrochers, 1999). There is research that suggests that the performance of welfare recipients on measures such as time to complete the degree and grade point average is about the same as for non-welfare receiving students; their performance is bolstered where there are PSE programs that focus on the needs of welfare recipients (Gittell, Vandersall, Holdaway, & Newman, 1996; Price, Steffy, & McFarlane, 2003).

Welfare recipients also stand to gain from the "soft" benefits of higher education. Recipients report that their self-esteem and confidence improve as a result of going to college (Price, 2000). Mothers describe how their children are positively impacted by seeing a parent studying and completing college (Gittell, Gross, & Holdaway, 1993). Increasing and widespread (higher) education is associated with a demographic transition whereby child mortality and birthrates decrease and standards of living improve (Pandey et al., 2000), along with the possibility for a vibrant democracy energized by an astute, discerning, and participatory citizenry. In addition, the more a person earns the more he or she is able to contribute as a taxpayer.

Welfare reform forced those who could have benefitted from getting a credential into the low-wage job market because they were the most "work-ready." Many low wage jobs do not provide the experience that can be used to improve a person's job marketability, and rarely provide benefits such as health care or pensions. The Children's Defense Fund found that among welfare leavers in New York State, the only group likely to escape poverty by relying on earnings alone were those who had at least two years of higher education or a vocational degree (Children's Defense Fund, 2000).

While the steep decrease in the welfare rolls and increases in labor force participation have been taken as illustrative of the success of welfare reform, the situation is far more complex. The robust 1990s economy contributed greatly to welfare reform's success, especially the increase in service sector occupations. However, these are among the lowest paying and most impermanent jobs in the labor market. And even where there are gains in employment and earnings, the benefits are questionable. The Urban Institute asked the question "Does work pay?," noting that "The work incentives under TANF are heavily weighted toward inducing non-working families to move to work. However, the benefits of increased work effort and higher wage rates beyond part-time minimum wage work are offset by declines in cash aid and the phaseout of earned income tax credits (Urban Institute,1998, p. 27)." A study of welfare reform in 13 southern states concluded that views that "work pays" for welfare recipients does not consider the extra expenses that come with work (Tootle, 1999). A similar observation was made in a study of a major work first program in California: " . . . gains in income [through earned tax credits and work] were almost exactly counterbalanced by reductions in income from lower welfare and Food Stamp payments and by higher payroll taxes" (Freeman, Knab, Gennetian & Navarro, 2000, p. 5).

In states like New York where approximately only 30% of welfare leavers are continuously employed, a significant number of recipients find themselves needing welfare again (New York State Office of the State Comptroller, 2000). In sum, welfare reform has moved poor women into the workforce without bringing about a significant improvement in their economic status (Porter

& Dupree, 2001). The college option offered women competent and qualified to take advantage of it the possibility of strengthening their socioeconomic power. TANF undermined a quiet but effective route to economic viability for welfare recipients, a route which existed under AFDC.

Welfare and Postsecondary Education Before PRWORA

The Family Support Act of 1988 (FSA) brought into existence the Jobs Opportunities and Basic Skills Program (JOBS). The FSA encouraged states to offer education, including PSE, to qualified recipients. Under this policy regime 47 states allowed recipients to pursue at least two years of college, and 37 allowed up to four years of college participation (Gittell & Covington, 1993). Postsecondary programs that addressed the needs of low income parents flourished between this period and the implementation of PRWORA, as for example, in New York (for examples of model college programs and the obstacles they face under TANF, see Price et al., 2003). CUNY, the third largest university system in the nation, created programs that focused on the needs of welfare recipients (see Gittell et al., 1993; Gittell et al., 1996; Gittell & Vandersall, 1995). Programs offered varying combinations of financial aid search assistance, counseling, academic support, transportation and training-related expenses, and services such as on-campus childcare (see Price et al., 2003 for examples). However, under welfare reform these programs suffered funding cuts and were forced to change their mission from supporting public assistance receiving students pursuing degrees to that of immediately preparing them for any available job (Price et al., 2003).

Policy Paradox: Devolution, TANF, and Postsecondary Education

Devolution, an ideology used in support of welfare reform, was argued as a means to return states the flexibility in policy formulation they supposedly lost to intrusive and one-size-fits-all federal policies. Yet, devolution prevented states from continuing their FSA and JOBS interpretations of education as a way to aid their resident's efforts to attain economic viability.

The welfare reform policies that we identified as most injurious to recipients pursuing higher education were those that disallowed or restricted participation in PSE and that mandated

minimum work requirements, but failed to define school attendance as work. As detailed below, recipients and civil society groups worked to change these rules and to address related problems such as the need for childcare, transportation, and other education-related expenses. These are fundamental needs that low-income people must address in order to execute the ordinary activities and involvements that are a part of getting a college degree. Efforts to reform state, county, and municipal TANF PSE policy occurred in distinct sociocultural, institutional, political, and economic contexts, which the following sections illustrate.

Political Culture: Analytic, Historical, and Institutional Contexts

The conception of political culture we employed draws on the work of Daniel Elazar (1972; 1994; 1992). We find Elazar's treatment of political culture useful in comprehending how reform articulates with dominant political and social ideologies, especially in pointing toward how to use local ideologies and language in the service of reform. Political culture constitutes a field in which norms, attitudes, beliefs, and values of individual and group political behavior are played out (Elazar, 1994, p. 3). Elazar does not treat political culture's influence as fixed and completely determining of behavior. Rather, political cultures are continually changing as new frontiers arise, the products of the interaction of population dynamics, new technologies, and new ideas; yet they retain their core values in the new contexts (Elazar, 1972; 1992; 1994).

America began as a society influenced by two dominant but contrasting political visions associated with the earliest settlers of Puritan, non-Puritan English, and Germanic stock (Native and African American contributions to political culture are unacknowledged). One is a market-based orientation that emphasizes commerce and individual pursuit of opportunity. The other orientation is an idea of communalism and commonwealth, where the citizenry are expected to work together to produce the best government possible, based on shared moral values and principles. Sometimes these contrasting visions can effectively co-exist and at other times they clash (Elazar, in Palmer et al., 1992, p. xxiii).

Elazar defines the American political system as having three primary political-cultural orientations: moralistic; traditional; individualistic. He calls these "subcultures" (Elazar, 1994; Elazar in Palmer et al., 1992, p. xxiii) because despite differences, the shared values are too intertwined to warrant defining each as a specific culture. Each subculture is associated with specific sections of the states that make up the nation and a product of the contrasting marketplace and commonwealth ideas.

In *individualistic* political cultures the role of government is viewed as limited mainly to that of maintaining a free market, and performing limited utilitarian functions. Private interests are paramount and government is not seen as a vehicle for creating a just society. Hence, there is a prevailing view that government intervention into public life should be limited. This view informs conceptions of political participation and the role of political actors. Politics are treated as a part of the marketplace, and can be used to further a person's own self-interests: "Politics is just another means by which individuals may improve themselves socially and economically" (Elazar, in Palmer et al., 1992, p. xxiii). However, individualism does not preclude citizen-driven reform efforts, especially where privileged relationships with influential leaders can be developed, as our Wyoming case study suggests.

Moralistic political cultures are grounded in the view that politics are the instrument by which people use government to build the "good society." The role of government and politics is to improve the commonwealth for all. Politicians and the public approach politics as a participatory endeavor, not as the province of self-serving individuals. Amateurs can play important roles in politics in moralistic political cultures. In the interest of bettering the commonwealth, when necessary, it is permissible for government to intervene into private affairs. Even political party ideologies are seen as less important than the needs and desires of the citizenry. Within moralistic political cultures politicians do not fear proposing new programs even if the citizenry do not clamor for it, if they feel the need is there and it will improve society. Still, in moralistic political cultures interventions tend to be local (Elazar, in Palmer et al., 1992, p. xxiv), and moralism can be taken to extremes. Maine is the epitome of a moralistic political culture, although over time the southeastern and urban parts of the state have developed strong individualistic orientations.

Traditionalistic political cultures are rooted in feudal-like notions of society and government that developed in the context of the agrarian plantation economy. Government and politics are viewed as being rightly governed by an elite whose power derives from their social and kin networks. Although traditional political cultures are especially associated with the secessionist states of the South, early southern settlers (up through the 20th century) moved into an influenced the development of border states such as Kentucky, and indeed some moved farther West. In traditional political cultures government is used in the service maintaining the status quo and its hierarchy, and paternalism remains a reality in many political and governmental arenas. New programs are rarely initiated unless they are related to maintaining the status quo, or there is substantial pressure. Kentucky is an example of a traditional political culture, but it is also an example of how political cultures change over time. Kentuckians of the past two decades have become increasingly effective in making government responsive to their needs and desires.

Maine: Changing the Rules of the Game— Politics, Activism, and Advocacy

Maine is a small, racially homogeneous state with approximately 1.2 million residents, more than half of whom live in rural areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Ethnic and racial minorities make up less than two percent of its population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Maine's economy has always lagged compared to other Northeastern states, and historically it has been among the nation's poorest states. Work opportunities have tended to be labor intensive and seasonal. Thus, economic development and self-sufficiency have always been important issues for Mainers. Maine's foundational industries were fish, fur, granite, timber, shipbuilding and textile production. Slowly, all of these industries declined as sources of reliable and widely available employment. Even with the growth of tourism as a positive source of revenue in the 1990s, Maine's economy still plagues its citizens with unemployment, under-employment, and low-paying service jobs.

Maine's political culture is predominantly moralistic. The moralistic tendencies are predominantly the product of the influ-

ence of its Puritan and Yankee settlers. The French Canadians are especially associated with the development of the individualistic political culture tendencies (Elazar 1992, p. xxii). Maine's moralistic tendencies are represented in the citizenry's commitment to the public good, using government and the private sector to achieve this end. In Maine, citizen's participation in politics is highly valued, and it is widely believed that government should be accessible to the people (Palmer et al., 1992, p. 4). The individualistic Mainers, however, seek to use politics to protect the status quo, especially the market, and their own personal and familial interests. They remain, however, a weak influence on Maine's politics.

Historically, Maine's politics have been dominated by "amateurs," (Elazar, 1992, p. xii), consistent with the view that politics and government are the province of the people, not elites. Its legislature is semi-professional as legislators typically hold jobs in addition to political office. This is changing, however, as the state's legislature becomes more professionalized.

Although Republicans have dominated Maine's political institutions since the 1950s, they respect the communitarian ethos, and unlike in other states, rarely take rigid ideological positions. Consensus is important to Mainers, and politicians have had to find ways to meet this desire. During elections, personalities and issues appeal more to Mainers than ideology (Palmer et al., 1992, p. 5). In moralistic political cultures the idea of serving the commonwealth imbues political relationships, suggesting that a politician's personal ties and loyalties to a party are not the primary concern of their political activity. Maine's citizenry has law-making power in the form of the initiative and referendum, reinforcing the participatory political role of the citizenry in law making. Attempts to make or repeal laws can begin with only ten percent of the voters in the last gubernatorial election.

Maine was the first state to successfully challenge and reform TANF's restrictions on the higher education option. This is consistent with the state's commitment to education. For example, in 1982 (under AFDC), advocates were able to convince the Maine Department of Human Services (MDHS) to take advantage of a Reagan administration federal Work Incentive Demonstration project by allowing women on welfare to go to college (Price &

Greene, 1999, p. 6). The advocates aimed to show how higher education is a means of eradicating poverty and empowering women. This demonstration eventually came to be known as ASPIRE. Thus, Maine and its state welfare bureaucracy supported the higher education option, consistent with Elazar's view that bureaucracies in moralistic political cultures tend to be pragmatic and non-ideological (Elazar, 1992).

The MDHS aims to be accessible to all the state's citizenry, unlike many state welfare bureaucracies. It has a history of working with citizen advisory groups, and since the eighties, under different governors, has maintained a focus on helping its clients become self-sufficient. Under Democratic Governor Brennan (1979–1987) the MDHS's approach to its clients was to " . . . improve the social and economic conditions of the poor" (Palmer et al., 1992, p. 90). Under Republican Governor McKernan the focus changed to education and skills training as the way to get people off welfare and out of poverty. The MDHS Maine has been relatively generous in budgeting for welfare. For example, in 1989, welfare accounted for 23.6 percent of the state's expenditures, compared to an average of 19.8 percent for all states (Palmer et al., 1992, pp. 117–118). Close working relationships between legislators and the citizenry help explain Maine's policies on welfare.

The groundbreaking legislation that established Maine as a leading proponent of the higher education option for welfare recipients was Chapter 1054-B (June 1997, c.530, § B-1), *Parents as Scholars* (PaS). It is far-reaching because it set another precedent: that of being an education-focused Maintenance-of-Effort (MOE) program. Under PRWORA, the MOE approach was touted as a means of giving states the flexibility to design their own welfare programs in ways that deviate from the federal legislation, as long as states pay for most of it with their own funds. This is not as straightforward as it seems since the state must be politically and economically willing and able to set aside non-TANF funds for welfare programs. The PaS program is administered by the Maine Department of Human Services (MDHS), which is significant because it requires working with Maine's institutions of higher education. The PaS program is a companion to the state's TANF program, ASPIRE.

The initial legislation provided for the participation of up

to 2000 TANF recipients in PaS. The program had roughly 1200 participants as of summer 2000 (personal communication, 2000). The PaS program is open to all TANF recipients attending two or four year institutions, and who meet two requirements: having the necessary aptitude for the program chosen (this is typically interpreted as having a GED or high school diploma) and being already enrolled in college (a PaS participant cannot already have a bachelor's degree). PaS provides a range of supports that include "occupational expenses," book and supplies, child care, transportation-related expenses, dental and eye care, up to $500 in car repairs, and other supports. The student must pay his-her own tuition, but financial aid is often sufficient to cover these costs. PaS participants receive a monthly check equivalent to what they would receive under TANF. Because PaS is an MOE program, the legislation can stipulate that the time spent in the program does not count against a recipient's TANF five-year lifetime limit. However, participants are expected to complete their degrees in a timely manner.

Students in PaS are required to work 20 hours per week during their first two years of college, but study and classroom time count as work. A student is accorded one and one-half hours of work/study hours for each hour spent in classroom instruction. Therefore, a 12 twelve hour course load is interpreted as 30 hours of work (12 hours in class, 18 hours study time; see the *Parent as Scholars* website). After two years the work load increases, but given the broad interpretation of work activities, this does not present the obstacles to college participation found in other states.

Maine offers a noteworthy model of civil society collaboration on reform. Public assistance students, academics and college administrators, welfare administrators, poverty lawyers, faith-based groups, advocates, and state legislators, were all able to cooperate and build consensus on what poor women (focusing on single mothers) need to get in, stay in, and complete college. This group was able to build the political support to create and fund an MOE program. This configuration of actors seems to be the ideal configuration of civil society actors who together can reform welfare reform PSE policy.

The road to reform in Maine began innocently and on unrelated fronts that converged over time. The Dean of Students

at the University of Southern Maine, while driving to work, heard a National Public Radio news story about the then-pending welfare reform legislation, and wondered about its impact on her students. This led her to discuss the issue with a faculty member of the university's women's studies and social work programs, who then asked two poverty attorneys working at the Maine Equal Justice Project (MEJP) about the potential impact of welfare reform on higher education. These actors would become intimately involved in the reform process.

On another front, advocates and welfare recipients were active in ways that aided mobilization. The Women's Economic Security Project (WESP), a coalition of women's, poverty, faith-based, labor, and social service groups, began a campaign to counter the anti-welfare and fault-finding rhetoric that accompanied welfare reform debates. Prior to welfare reform, WESP had conducted its own research among welfare recipients, and with the help of an economist, published the widely publicized report "Living on the Edge: Women Working and Providing for Families in the Maine Economy"(Price & Greene, 1999, p. 7). This report became a "weapon" in the hands of poverty and women's advocates. WESP's focus was on developing and presenting a picture of how the economic system works to keep women and single parents poor (Price & Greene, 1999, p. 7). WESP used creative means for disseminating their research. They contacted newspaper editorial boards, provided educational luncheons for legislators, and created a speaker's bureau that sent their people to talk to community groups (Price & Greene, 1999, p. 7).

Finally, during a community action-sponsored Walk-a-Mile project that paired legislators and welfare recipients, a Republican legislator on the Health and Human Services committee, found himself walking with a young welfare recipient struggling to complete college (Price & Greene, 1999). Being able to talk with this woman and learn the details of her struggles and aspirations is believed to have led this legislator to become a supporter of the higher education option.

These three developments eventually converged. The Main Equal Justice Project, whose focus is on providing low income people legal representation aimed at strengthening their voice in public policy arenas (http://www.mejp.org/Who.htm), took a

leading role in developing a strategy for pushing the PSE option. The MEJP was assisted by the Main Equal Justice Partners (created shortly after the Maine Equal Justice Project), which focuses on class action and administrative representation. The two groups worked with the Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods (M.A.I.N.), a statewide coalition of advocacy groups focused on the needs of low-income people.

The MEJP attorneys studied their options carefully because there were no models to follow as welfare reform was in the process of being implemented. They decided that they would pursue the MOE option. This meant that they would need to secure the political support and financial resources needed to create a state-funded welfare program that assists women who go to college. MEJP, in consultation with M.A.I.N., wrote a proposal that eventually became the PaS bill (Price & Greene, 1999, p. 5). University of Southern Maine academics and administrators were instrumental in getting their welfare students to mobilize and prepare public testimony, while other advocates and grassroots groups did the same. The participation and testimony of TANF students and former welfare recipients was an indispensable part of the legislative and lobbying process. Many of the students involved in the reform process continued their activism in other arenas after getting the PaS legislation passed.

The legislative sponsor was Democratic Senator Chellie Pingree, a popular legislator who '. . . lobbied tirelessly in support of the bill with her colleagues in the press and with the executive branch. . . .' (Price & Greene, 1999, p. 8). Pingree played a role in positively influencing the position of the MDHS, making known to the Maine Commission of Human Services that she wanted to see the legislation passed (Price & Greene, 1999, p. 8). There were nine co-sponsors of the legislation, and it had bipartisan support. When the legislation reached committee it met little resistance, although it was carefully deliberated. The efforts of Mainers to reform TANF gained them national recognition, and they provided a beacon of hope to countless TANF college students, activists, and advocates around the nation.

The primary problem in implementing PaS in Maine was making caseworkers aware of the new rules. Early on there were complaints that caseworkers were not informing recipients of the

college option. However, these problems were quickly identified and redressed. Caseworkers are now required to inform recipients of the college option.

Kentucky: Changing the Rules of the Game—Politics, Activism and Advocacy

Kentucky, once dependent upon industries such as fur, tobacco and mining, is now dominated by construction, manufacturing, and wholesale and retail trade. The state's total population in 2000 was just over four million, with 55 percent of the populace living in urban areas and 44 percent in rural areas (Kentucky Deskbook, 2003). Whites constitute 90 percent of the population and African Americans 7.3 percent, while less than two percent is Latino/a (Kentucky Deskbook, 2003).

Kentucky's political culture is essentially traditional, although it has growing individualistic tendencies (see Miller, 1994). The state's politics have been significantly shaped by political factionalism and the influence of the Governor's office. In Kentucky, the Governor has often exercised great authority despite the longstanding restriction of being able to serve only a single four year term. Brief legislative sessions, cronyism, patronage, and a weak and unprofessional legislature, combined to make possible a stronger executive office. Charisma, social networks, and political skill are important sources of power and influence in Kentucky politics.

Within the past two decades Kentucky's political climate and culture has changed, and an organized citizenry are the vanguard of this change. They have been demanding that government be more responsive to their needs. For instance, the passage of the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act, a comprehensive bill, led to sweeping reforms in the primary and secondary education arena. This effort was spearheaded by a range of interest and advocacy groups who overcame sectarian concerns to collaborate on overhauling the education system. Reform of TANF PSE policy suggests that Kentucky citizens are continuing to pressure government to be responsive to their needs and desires. Another factor influencing the move away from old-style traditional politics has been the increased professionalism of the state's legislature. Also,

the governor can now run for a second term, further increasing the power and influence of the office.

Democrats have dominated Kentucky politics, and factionalism has been a defining feature of party politics. Factionalism, however, has hinged around geographic and personality differences, not ideology. This is related to Kentucky's 120 county governments and their often provincial politics. Combined, these factors contribute to the view that Kentucky has a traditional political culture (Miller, 1994). Traditional political cultures are structured around elites who rationalize that their right to govern is rooted in family ties and social class and not an ideology of democratic participation. Politicians function as gatekeepers and protectors of the status quo instead of representatives of people seeking an improved commonwealth. Government is allowed an active role in traditional political cultures as long as it works in the service of policies that do not change the status quo. In such a climate, citizen-initiated social reform can be difficult to achieve, especially where ideology is strong.

Kentucky's TANF plan is called Kentucky Transitional Assistance Plan (KTAP). Under welfare reform, state officials' initial interpretation of TANF granted little flexibility to KTAP recipients engaged in PSE, outside of being allowed to continue their studies for the first 12 months of implementation (while working 20 hours per week). However, after the first year, difficulties for KTAP students surfaced as officials began to more rigidly interpret and enforce TANF rules. Some students were partially able to meet their work requirements through work study assignments. But under-funded work study programs (often limiting participants to 12 hours per week) meant a shortage of positions and recipients typically had to find work elsewhere to make up the remaining mandatory work hours. At the time there were no reliable data on the number of KTAP recipients enrolled in college, but their numbers were sufficient to become the thrust of a reform movement (since the reform of TANF PSE policy the community colleges now collect data on KTAP-receiving students). The impact of TANF on acquisition of PSE credentials in Kentucky surfaced as an issue important to recipients, and was taken up by advocates and grassroots citizen and welfare groups.

The primary groups involved in initiating the reform process

were the Jefferson County Welfare Reform Coalition (JCWRC), the Welfare Reform Coalition, (WRC) and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KfC). The Office of Kentucky Legal Services later became involved, and along with KfC, was instrumental in building and holding together the reform venture. The two groups served constituencies and offered services that complimented each other. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, composed largely of low-income and working class people, has nearly two decades of experience in grassroots organizing, leadership development, increasing citizen participation, and working to achieve social justice. Kentucky Legal Services provides service to low income individuals, the elderly, and other vulnerable populations.

Not long after TANF was implemented in Kentucky, JCWRC polled 300 Jefferson country TANF recipients to find what they wanted most under welfare reform. A major desire of recipients was to acquire education and training, which they saw as their avenue to economic viability. Using this information, KfC organized a weekend retreat to work on building and cementing a collaborative reform venture consisting of a range of interests and constituencies, and to draft a comprehensive bill supportive of higher education. Other coalition groups represented at the retreat include the Kentucky Commission on Women, Kentucky Youth Advocates, the Catholic Conference, and the Metro Needs Alliance. The collaborative found creative ways to disseminate their messages, such as brief videos of testimonies given by recipients at public forums. The testimonies focused on the importance of higher education to improving KTAP recipients' life chances. The groups worked to get community and four year college faculty and administrators, and student governments to endorse their proposed legislation. The legislation drafted by this coalition, and later amended and passed by Kentucky legislators, is HB (House Bill) 434 (Regular Session, 1998, No. 1323).

The collaborative considered asking the state welfare bureaucracy, the Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children (KCfFC) to endorse their advocacy campaign. The KCfFC was at that point very conservative in its welfare reform policy. The collaborative decided against allowing the KCfFC to have a hand in shaping their proposal; instead, they decided to introduce and build

support for their own legislation. Similar to the strategy undertaken by a grassroots welfare PSE reform group in Wyoming (EMPOWER), the Kentucky group sought to reinstate the higher education options extant under JOBS and AFDC, where recipients could acquire at least two years of higher education. The collaborative looked to Maine's legislation and PaS program as models for their legislation, and decided to design their own version of PaS: the Kentucky Education Assistance for Parents program (KEAP). KEAP, like PaS, was envisioned as a separate state-funded MOE program. Major KEAP provisions would have reduced work requirements to ten hours per week, provided childcare and transportation subsidies, incrementally increased the number of KEAP slots to a total of 2000, and added an extra year of public assistance after the five year limit was reached. Students with high GPA's would have had their work requirements rescinded.

Another recurrent feature of successful reform of a state's PSE policy under TANF is finding and building supporting within the state legislature. A Kentucky Legal Services attorney, Rich Seckel, noted that legislative sponsors "were recruited one by one" (Seckel, 1999). In Kentucky the coalition sought out House Democrat Thomas Burchell, who at the time chaired the Health and Welfare Committee. Burchell had previously worked with Kentucky welfare groups, and was a supporter of the higher education option. Burchell became a leading sponsor of the new welfare reform collaborative and their legislative proposal.

An initial obstacle to reform was the intransigence of the Kentucky's state welfare bureaucracy. The Cabinet's leadership claimed that KEAP would jeopardize their work participation rates and that it would be too expensive to administer. Senator Paul Mason's (R) staff estimated (erroneously) that KEAP would cost $20 million (Price & Greene, 1999, p. 25). The KCfFC argued that it could reform the rules through administrative procedures such as interpreting TANF to count school as work, and that legislative change was unnecessary. Apparently, the bureaucracy viewed the reformers as a challenge to its authority and control over policy change. This reluctance to engage the citizenry in policy discussion, and to defend the status quo is consistent with the tendencies associated with traditional political cultures.

Burchell and Kentucky Legal Services attorney Seckel had to make the case that KEAP did not require additional funds, but a reorganization of the existing budget. These became important points for making compromises to get the legislation passed.

By the end of January 1998 KEAP had been eliminated from HB 434, as a result of compromises. The decisions were strategic as Burchell believed that he could not build the support to pass HB 434 as long as KEAP was a part of the bill. He knew that KCfFC would oppose KEAP, and was worried that the Governor's office would also oppose it (see Price & Greene, 1999, for details of the movement of HB 434 through the legislative process). Kentucky Legal Service did not easily give up on KEAP; they wanted to make the point that KEAP would not be a dramatic shift from what existed under AFDC and JOBS. However, in the interest of getting a victory that could later be expanded, the reformers agreed to have KEAP removed from HB 434. Negotiation over HB 434 occurred mainly between the bill's sponsors, the Executive Director of KCfFC, and Kentucky Legal Service attorney Seckel. KTAP students were also involved in the process, providing experiential testimony about what they needed to stay in school and become economically viable, and how welfare reform was undermining their efforts and goals. The reformers' combination of substantive background research and preparation, in-depth grasp of the issues, and activism in and around the state house, put them in a good negotiating position, even though they had to sacrifice KEAP.

The bill passed through the House and Senate with no opposition. On April 1, 1999, HB 434 was signed by Governor Patton. By this time the Governor's staff realized that there was room for flexibility in TANF's rules on participation in higher education and that HB 434 could fit into their education platform. Governor Patton, after all, ran for office as an "education" Governor. Even the KCfFC's executive quickly changed discourses, now proclaiming herself a friend of higher education, and claiming that her opposition to HB 434 was about the strategies of the reformers and not their goals. The politicians and bureaucrats recognized that the TANF PSE reform movement was not a serious threat to status quo of traditional politics. Ironically, it offered a means to improve their political clout through gaining support of the poor,

all in the name of education (the executive director of the KcfFC eventually came to argue that all poor parents deserve access to PSE and has worked toward making this a reality). House Bill 434 permits KTAP recipients at least two years participation in higher education, and limits work requirements to 20 hours per week. Additionally, work study meets the definition of acceptable work activities. Once KTAP recipients reach the 24 month higher education participation limit, they are then required to work 30 hours per week (ten of these hours are deducted for time spent in classroom instruction). Soon after passage of HB 434, the KCfFC provided one million dollars to support its implementation. Some of this money was used to increase the number of funded work study slots for KTAP recipients (assuming that this would facilitate their being able to more easily meet work requirements). The bureaucracy has since broadened its commitment to PSE for TANF recipients by, for example, asking that all community colleges of the state higher education system focus on TANF recipients as a distinct segment of their student population.

Even though HB 434 was eventually endorsed by a broad range of governmental and civil society groups, implementation of the policy immediately presented two primary problems. According to a representative of K-TAP recipients, caseworkers were discouraging them from pursuing the higher education option (interview with K-TAP recipient and activist, L.G, 1999). As in Maine, line personnel were unaware of the details of the legislation and the adjustments that would have to be made in interpreting the rules. Also, caseworkers in Kentucky were at that time not properly trained to assess recipient readiness for higher education. These issues have been addressed through administrative procedures.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

Not since the late 1960s and early 1970s has civil society groups been able to reform welfare in ways that reflect the perspectives, aspirations, and needs of welfare recipients. Quietly, between 1997 and the present, the kinds of reforms of TANF PSE policy narrated above in the two state case studies have occurred in more than 20 states (see Price et al. 2003). Indeed, the state,

county and city levels are the most effective levels at which to reform welfare reform PSE policy. This article has chronicled the ways in which collaborating civil society groups worked to reform the aspects of TANF that restricted or denied the PSE option to welfare recipients.

The state case studies show that diverse collaboratives and multifaceted strategies are effective modes of initiating and sustaining reform work. The collaboratives described here reached beyond welfare-oriented groups to include academic, housing, poverty, legal aid, women's, children, PSE, and faith-based groups. Conducting initial basic and field research, organizing at the grassroots level, and identifying potential allies in city or state government are important elements of reform work. Broad-based support must be built around the TANF PSE issue.

Initial organizing and advocacy activities must include basic and field research. Data and analysis that illustrate the nature and scope of welfare and PSE issues are of great utility. Information about the issues—the value of higher education to recipients and society—must be strategically disseminated. Sound stratagems for drawing attention to the issues are equally important. While direct action was a part of the repertoire of many reform movements, it was used strategically and aimed at drawing attention while building support. The initial reform process should also include understanding a state's political culture. This can provide insight into how reform work can engage the orientations and ideologies of a given political culture.

Relationship building—within the reform movement and with groups outside of it—may be the most important part of TANF PSE reform work. No particular model of organizing and mobilization emerged; what worked at the local level within the political context is what groups did, learning and adapting as they went along.

Effort should be directed toward identifying students who are affected by TANF. Experience shows their testimony can be persuasive and "... puts a human face on the issue" (Interview with Gina, a TANF student-activist from California, 2001). Aside from students, other groups may have an interest in confronting TANF's restrictions on higher education. This includes (but is not limited to) college administrators concerned with en-

rollment, college faculty committed to improving the life chances of poor students, and poverty, women's and family advocates concerned with improving poor women's social mobility potential and life chances. Advocates have an important role to play, whether it is helping grassroots people organize and develop strategies through building collaborative ventures or identifying and securing resources. Poverty lawyers must be included among advocates. Now that there exists a range of models and strategies for reforming TANF PSE policy, activists, advocates, and researchers should study these as a part of their development of reform strategies. They should interview people who have experience in the TANF PSE reform process.

Getting legislation passed or achieving administrative rule change does not guarantee that the desired reforms will occur. The policies may fail to be implemented in step with their intended letter and spirit. This may occur at institutional and micro levels (e.g., caseworkers not following new policy). At the macro level, a state bureaucracy may not have the will or resources to quickly implement reforms, and there may not be a supervisory structure to police the process. Vigilant observation of the implementation process must be maintained.

Common bureaucracy problems include a failure for the reforms to be communicated to caseworkers, a lack of caseworker competence in vital areas such as assessment of college readiness, and poor communication between welfare and college administrators. These are areas where snafus are likely to occur and should be closely monitored.

Winning the PSE option under welfare reform requires knitting together a constituency through organizing, advocacy, and networking and collaboration, as well as developing political savvy that grasps the clear and implicit norms and behaviors that structure political activity. While most TANF PSE reforms have occurred as a result of people learning through trial and error and persevering through sheer determination, there are enough examples of winning strategies to facilitate a more deliberative approach to ensuring that welfare recipients and low income single parents in general have the opportunity and supports to get the kinds of PSE credentials that may improve their life chances.

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