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# The feminization of poverty : welfare to work research project

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**THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY  
WELFARE TO WORK RESEARCH PROJECT**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to**

**The Faculty of the Department of Social Science**

**San Jose State University**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Arts**

**by**

**Kim S. Petersen**

**May 1997**

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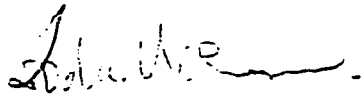
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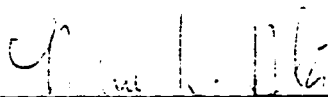
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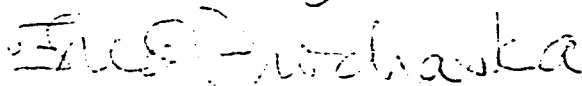
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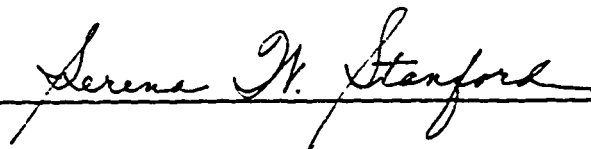
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## ABSTRACT

### THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY WELFARE TO WORK RESEARCH PROJECT

by Kim S. Petersen

The research portion of this thesis will examine a community college vocational training program designed to transition welfare mothers from welfare to work. While many women are poor for some of the same reasons that men are poor, they live in a job-poor area or they lack the necessary skills or education, much of women's poverty is due to two causes which are basically unique to females. First, women often must provide all or most of the support for their children. Secondly, women are at a disadvantaged in the labor market.

This thesis will address the major strategies to combat poverty that have been implemented in the United States from the early 1800s to the 1990s. These strategies provide insights about why past social policies and proposed reforms have not addressed the current trend of the growing number of women and children born into poverty.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	v
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Single Women and Children	
Economic Conditions	
2. SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY ANALYSIS . . . . .	13
Male Pauper Paragon	
Social Reform Approach to Poverty	
The Welfare Solution	
3. STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL POVERTY DEBATES . . . . .	25
Trends in Family Income, Inequality and Poverty	
Real Wage Earnings	
The Culture of Poverty	
Structural Conditions	
4. DE ANZA COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH PROJECT . . . . .	43
California's Community College System	
Methodology and Empirical Data Collection	
Project Requirements and Outcomes	

**Misinformation and Welfare Recipients**

**Welfare Reform Policies**

**5. CONCLUSION . . . . . 72**

**Social Policy Reform**

**Beyond Gender-Biased Social Policy**

**REFERENCE LIST BY CHAPTER . . . . . 88**

**Chapter 1**

**Chapter 2**

**Chapter 3**

**Chapter 4**

**Chapter 5**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . 99**

## List of Tables

Table	Page
3.1. Percentage of person in poverty within selected demographic groups, 1990 . . . . .	28
3.2. Profile of the poverty population, 1960-1990 . . . . .	30
4.1 Enrollment in GAIN at Santa Clara County Community Colleges, 1995-96 . . . . .	47
4.2 Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, Basic Skills and Vocational Education . . . . .	49
4.3a Percentage of total AFDC Cases in Santa Clara County by Ethnicity . . . . .	54
4.3b Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Ethnicity . . . . .	54
4.4 Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Age . . . . .	55
4.5 Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Number of Dependent Children . . . . .	55
4.6 Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Years on AFDC . . . . .	56
4.7 Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Current Education . . . . .	56
4.8 Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Age of Youngest Dependent Child . . . . .	57
4.9 Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Employment History . . . . .	57
4.10 Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Learning Disabilities . . . . .	58

4.11a	Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Vocational Enrollment, Highest . . . . .	60
4.11b	Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Vocational Enrollment, Lowest . . . . .	60
4.12	Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Completions . . . . .	62
4.13	Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96, by Vocational Program . . . . .	62

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

If ever there were a country where there should be no poor, it would be the United States of America. With a gross national product (GNP) in the trillions, 70 percent of the largest corporations in the world, and an overabundance of food products, America is indeed rich (Burghardt & Fabricant, 1987). Yet, why do millions of Americans turn to public assistance programs for help each year? Likewise, why have over thirty million U.S. citizens fallen below the poverty line annually during the 1980s and 1990s (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a)?

The vast majority of households in America receiving public assistance are families headed by women. Women's poverty is not a recent phenomenon. In 1821, more than 60% of the residents of the first almshouse in New York City were women (Thomas, 1994, p. 97). The 1890 census data indicated that slightly over 14% of households were female headed as compared with 17% in 1991 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). In 1993, 90 percent of the four million adults on welfare were women. From 1978 to 1990, the number of persons living in poverty in the United States increased from 25.5 million to 33.6 million, an approximate 32 percent increase or an average of 2.6 percent increase per year (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). The 1980s marked not only this country's fall into massive debt, but also a time in which the largest number of

families were living in poverty since 1964 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). In 1990, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program served a total of 11.1 million persons, 3.8 million families, with total annual assistance payments of around \$12.5 billion (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). Approximately two-thirds of the individuals served were children. From 1970 to 1990, the number of impoverished families headed by women increased about 1.35 million, from 1.95 million to 3.3 million. Of all low income families with children, 45 percent were headed by women in 1970, compared to 61 percent in 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a).

According to Garfinkel and McLanahan (1994), more than half of the current generation of children will live with a single mother before reaching the age eighteen, and many of these children will spend their entire childhood with a mother who is single. Single-mother households will endure an average of five to six years. Never-married mothers households will last an average of two to twelve years. Fifty percent of women today will divorce, and although remarriage rates are high, 50 percent of second marriages will again end in divorce (Gordon, 1994, p. 108). Most mother-only families will experience heavy doses of economic and social insecurity, which are known to be harmful to children's future well-being (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1994, p. 205).

The experience of being a single mother, and its meanings, have changed drastically since the early nineteenth century. Prior to the 1930s, there was pity

for the widow and the deserted wife. There was a sense of dignity attached to a mother struggling alone with children. However, single motherhood by choice was on the edge of immorality in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the last few decades, because of the dramatic increase in divorce rates among middle-class women, it has finally become clear to many that single motherhood is not a "deviant" phenomenon (Gordon, 1994, p. 102).

Single mothers, not unlike the early twentieth century, continue to face contradictory expectations and policies about women's employment. Not working outside the home means, for most single mothers: poverty, the hassles and humiliation of collecting aid, deprivation of adult company and time away from home, and social condemnation as "welfare" recipients. But working outside the home means, for most single mothers: tedious, low-paid jobs, inadequate and unreliable child care, the exhaustion of the "double day," and condemnation as a neglectful mother (Gordon, 1994, p. 121).

There has been a continuing tendency within both family scholarship and social welfare policy to treat single motherhood as aberrant, rather than ethical and moral. Welfare provisions, child care, and women's wages are still inadequate to provide good child-raising conditions (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1994, p. 207). Single mothers have become merely the extreme case for all others. The treatment of single mothers affect the conditions of mothering and marriages for all women.



Feminist scholar, Linda Gordon, in Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare (1994), concludes that a lack of social support for single mothers makes marriage coercive. She argues that if mothers must be supported by men to be good mothers, then it would appear that good mothering is dependent on women being dependent. Gordon concludes that standards for good parenting need to be reconsidered with the awareness that gender relationships in families are changing, and that the traditional sexual division of labor in child raising is no longer typical nor is it necessarily the best arrangement.

Scholars and policy makers have assumed that stable families are and must be economically independent, and that families needing outside help to support children could not be stable in the long run. The 1996 welfare reform legislation rests on the premise that children's long term interests are served by requiring single mothers to participate in the paid workforce (Lehman & Danziger, 1996, p. 2). The legislation also assumes that children who are currently being cared for by their mothers will receive adequate childcare once their mothers have jobs. However, the current welfare reform package does not take into account the fact that good childcare is expensive. According to Choices for Children, a professional childcare organization in the State of California, during 1996, weekly childcare rates for one child ages 2 to 5 years, averaged \$139. The high incidence of female headed families for over a

century and the severe material problems that face responsible and energetic as well as irresponsible and depressed single mothers, suggest the need to question whether economic independence should be the highest goal or even the desirable norm for good child raising (Gordon, 1994, p. 302).

### Single Women and Children

Without alternative economic resources, the impact of women's poverty on the economic status and well being of children will continue to deteriorate. The poverty rate for children under six was 24 percent in 1990. In other words, nearly one out of every four preschool children lived in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 1991d, p. 5). In the same year the poverty rate for children living in female headed families was 53.9 percent. Among African American children, the poverty rate was 46.3 percent; among African American children living in female headed families, 66.6 percent. Among Mexican American children, 39.0 percent were poor; among Mexican American children living in female headed families, the poverty rate was 70.5 percent (Children's Defense Fund, 1991d, p. 24-25).

Since the mid 1980s, several critical, often life threatening, problems that particularly afflict poor women and children have become apparent. During the second half of the decade, substance abuse was recognized as a significant threat to the well being of mothers and their children. While cigarette smoking

and alcohol consumption are associated with severe health problems for the mother and child, the use of crack cocaine by pregnant women has captured the attention of both professionals and the media (Sidel, 1992, p. xxi).

Since 1985 when crack cocaine first appeared on the streets of New York, the number of "crack babies"-babies exposed to the drug when their mothers used it during pregnancy has grown alarmingly. One recent nationwide survey of women indicated that 11 percent of the respondents admitted using illegal drugs during pregnancy; many experts believe, however, that the number of pregnant women using drugs is far higher (Sidel, 1992, p. xxii).

Among the most devastating problems which disproportionately afflict poor women and children are human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and AIDS. Between 1981 to 1989, 8,556 AIDS cases were reported in women ages fifteen to forty-four. Over half 57.2 percent of the cases were related to intravenous drug use and another 20.2 percent to sexual relations with an intravenous drug user (Klerman, 1991, p. 30). AIDS is a serious problem among children under sixteen, although fewer than a third of the children of HIV infected women are thus far known to develop AIDS (The State of America's Children, 1991, p. 65). African American and Mexican American children make up 15 percent of the United States population younger than age fifteen but account for 52 percent of reported AIDS cases in that age group. Children of Mexican American origin represent only 9 percent of the pediatric population but account for 25 percent

of pediatric AIDS cases. (Klerman, 1990, p. 38). The number of new AIDS cases is increasing faster among women and newborns than among most other groups. Between 1988 and 1989 the number of AIDS cases in women increased 11 percent and there was a 17 percent increase in the number of cases transmitted from mother to newborn (Children's Defense Fund, 1991, p. 24-25).

Homelessness has become yet another national problem that has increased in scope and severity during the 1980s. Today families with children comprise approximately a third of the nation's homeless population. Estimates of the number of children who are homeless on any given night range from 61,500 to 500,000. According to the Children's Defense Fund (1991d), at least 100,000 American children go to bed homeless each night.

According to Ruth Sidel in Women and Children Last (1992), children are poor not because of women's poverty but because of state neglect. The lack of prenatal care, well-baby care, accessible day and after-school care, and the lack of an adequate child welfare system for those in need all indicate that the American society has told its mothers and children that they will have to proceed alone (Sidel, 1992, p. 190). Women for the most part provide the nurturing, the day-to-day care, and the hands-on child rearing. The fact that women are overwhelmingly the caretakers of children is a key determinant of their secondary economic status. State and social policies have not addressed

the needs unique to women and children. Poverty reform policies must acknowledge women's domestic and childcare responsibilities. Single mothers need not be destined to fall into poverty but are made poor by an inadequate state constructed policy. Any reform package that aspires to make a significant change along the dimensions of work, family, responsibility, and opportunity will be expensive.

Nevertheless, many Americans frustrated from wage and income inequality feel that the war on poverty has been fought and lost at taxpayers' expense. The economic hardships of the 1980s and 1990s have produced a resentment of entitlements. Millions of people working hard to survive and provide for their children resent the bite of taxes, especially tax money they believe to be benefitting others who they imagine may not work as hard (Gordon, 1992, p. 199).

Gordon (1992), maintains the concept of entitlement is fundamental to citizenship. Citizens have rights to which they are entitled by law, and losing this understanding endangers the republic. Entitlements include due process, fair trials, and legal representation; to vote and to run for office; security from attack and protection of private property; freedom to travel and to publish. As the welfare state expanded, entitlements grew extending for example to education, support in old age, protection from environmental hazards and infectious disease, and support for single mothers. However, anyone who

examines federal or state budgets sees that most domestic governmental expenditures go proportionally less to the poor and more to the nonpoor (Gordon, 1992, p. 201).

### Economic Conditions

Today's welfare crisis, then, is as much about values as about costs. Costs and needs are real problems, of course, and tightly connected. The loss of industrial jobs and decline in real wages that have made welfare more needed also increased the burdens of paying for it. Wage trends have generally been more negative for women with less than twelve years of education. Women with less than twelve years of education also have the lowest wage levels (U.S. Census Bureau, 1991d). There is clear evidence that the supply of workers, women with less the twelve years of education, already exceeds the demand for their service (Bernstein & Mishel, 1996, p. 3).

The conventional belief that time, in association with a growing economy, can erode the official poverty rate seems today to be quite wrong. The growing gap between the wages of college graduates and high school drop outs or graduates suggests that poor and minority women, especially those with limited basic skills, will not do well in the labor market (Bernstein & Mishel, 1996, p. 4). Chapter three presented in this thesis will discuss the economic trends of the United States during the last four decades and in particular it will address

the continued wage and income inequality single head of household women encounter.

There is evidence that community college training programs produce gains in earnings for mothers on welfare (Haveman, 1994. p. 16). Chapter four of this thesis will examine a community college vocational training program designed to transition welfare mothers from welfare to work. De Anza Community College located in Santa Clara County served over 150 single women on welfare during the academic year, 1995-1996. In Santa Clara County, about 9 percent of all (or 153,735 people) currently receive some type of public assistance. This includes 73,500 people, primarily children and mothers, who rely on AFDC cash aid for their means of support. About half of those receiving AFDC lacked a high school diploma or equivalent. While 21% of the current AFDC households have had someone working at least part-time, about half have no record of employment in the past two years. About 44% of all AFDC clients have been on aid longer than five years (Santa Clara County Department of Social Services, 1996). A preliminary report completed in August, 1996 by Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) estimates that a family's self-sufficiency wage standard in Santa Clara County for two adults and one preschooler is \$34,938 per year.

Education, employment, and training opportunities for single women on welfare in Santa Clara County must increase in order for women to compete for

highly competitive quality jobs. Demographic data and statistical information regarding the welfare recipients participating in this local community college program will be presented. Analysis and necessary components vital to a successful training program for single mothers on welfare will be outlined.

A successful vocational training program is by no means alone the answer to women's poverty. The silence about class, race, and gender and about the political economy that creates poverty by its very economic structure has been omitted from recent welfare reform policy. The current expenditures put forth in welfare reform do not compensate the assuming responsibility of women's domestic and childcare responsibilities. While many women are poor for some of the same reasons that men are poor, they live in a job-poor area or they lack the necessary skills or education, much of women's poverty is due to two causes which are basically unique to females. Women often must provide all or most of the support for their children, and they are at a disadvantaged in the labor market (Gordon, 1990, p. 14). Women may be coerced by new welfare reform requirements in accepting low-wage, unskilled, part-time jobs with terrible working conditions instead of holding out for education, good-quality child care and better jobs.

The following chapter of this thesis will evaluate the major strategies that were implemented in the United States from the early 1800s to the 1990s. These strategies, still accepted solutions for solving poverty among able-bodied



men, provide insights about why past social policies and proposed reforms have not addressed the current trend of the growing number of women on welfare and children born into poverty.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 1964, under President Lyndon Johnson, the war on poverty, a campaign against economic deprivation, was doomed to fail from the very beginning because of how it was preconceived. The poverty debate of the 1960s and throughout the 1990s has continued to exclude race, class, and gender as a basis of analysis. Feminist scholar Gwendolyn Mink, in "The Lady and Tramp: Gender, Race, and the Origins of the American Welfare State" (1990), observes that the welfare system has been constructed and guided by white male assumptions and priorities since the seventeenth century.

According to Mink, public resistance to welfare programs and the design of those programs is based on "manly" definitions of dignity and independence. Historically, most good quality welfare programs were designed as emergency wage-replacement provisions for those accustomed to at least upper-working-class wages. For different reasons and in different ways, virtually all but white men were excluded from jobs and thereby from the better welfare programs (p. 93). This philosophical framework, which has been decidedly male-centered, has set the foundation for continued exploitation of women and children. More importantly, it will continue to do so unless active steps are

taken to revisit the poverty issue from a gender, class, and race-based perspective.

The overwhelming evidence of male-centered strategies provides an understanding regarding the evolution of the feminization of poverty. Certain paternalistic and patriarchal assumptions about the nature of gender have been embedded in the analysis of the theory and practice of social policy. Most social policies aimed at women have been designed explicitly to benefit them in their capacity as wives and mothers and more particularly, to benefit those who depend upon them for nurturance and domestic service (Quadagno, 1988, p. 112). Furthermore, social policies have linked manhood to productivity and independence and womanhood to servility and dependence (Sapiro, 1990, p. 45). The following historical narrative of social welfare policy focuses on gender and racial relations in regard to power and examines past strategies from a gendered based perspective.

#### Male Pauper Paragon

Social policy, during the 1800s and early 1900s, basically rested on the belief that the welfare of society could be best assured by allowing individuals to pursue their own interests freely (Piven & Cloward, 1979, p. 126). However, women were confined to the roles of wife and mother due to maternalistic policies which reaffirmed the continuation of women's subordination. Solutions

to women's poverty were based on the notion of dependent motherhood. Whereas, solutions to men's poverty, during this period, were based on the concept of morality. "Ethics" justified the cruel treatment of poor men, reinforcing punitive measures for any able-bodied man who did not pull his own weight. Women reformers worked to turn men into "American" men and reinforced male responsibilities of fatherhood (Davis, 1967). Women taught the work ethic and vocational skills to young boys and instructed poor or unemployed men to seek jobs rather than relief (Sheffield, 1912, p. 644).

Rising costs for poor relief in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries convinced critics that able bodied men had penetrated the relief rolls. American patriot, Josiah Quincy, in his major report on the poor laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1821, concluded that the principle on which the laws rested divided the poor into "two classes": first, "the impotent poor in which denomination are included all who are wholly incapable of work, through old age, infancy, sickness or corporeal debility" (Katz, 1990, p. 11). Second were "the able poor...all, who are capable of work, of some nature, or other; but differing in the degree of their capacity and in the kind of work of which they are capable" (p. 11). No one disagreed about helping the impotent, but the able poor were another matter.

Clear-cut distinctions between poverty and pauperism among men were set forth in the 1800s. Reverend Charles Burroughs in 1834 , preaching at the

opening of a new chapel in the poorhouse in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, admonished his audience:

In speaking of poverty, let us never forget that there is a distinction between this and pauperism. The former is an unavoidable evil, to which many are brought from necessity, and in the wise and gracious Providence of God. It is the result, not of our faults, but of our misfortunes....Pauperism is the consequence of willful error, of shameful indolence, of vicious habits. It is a misery of human creation, the pernicious work of man, the lamentable consequence of bad principles and morals (Rothman, 1971).

The redefinition of poverty as a moral condition accompanied the transition to capitalism and democracy in early nineteenth century America.

Characteristics of race, poverty and dependency among new citizens fostered anxieties about the future of the republic. If new immigrant and black men were not economically independent or were not adequate providers, this was because they were "servile," "slavish," "coolies," and "serfs" (Mink, 1990, p. 96).

The way to eliminate unfit individuals was through immigration restriction, proper breeding, and removal from the political economy (Rothman, 1971).

The myths of the ubiquity of work and opportunity in America justified the cruel treatment of ethnic men. Realistically, the transformation in economic relations, the growth of cities, immigration, the seasonality of labor, fluctuations in consumer demand, periodic depressions, low wages restricting opportunities for women, industrial accidents, high mortality and the absence of any social insurance- together, all shaped chronic poverty and dependence into American social life (Miller, 1971, p. 112). Even though early records of administrative

agencies showed poverty as a complex product of social and economic circumstances, usually beyond individual control, public policy remained punitive and inadequate for poor men until the Great Depression of the 1930s.

### Social Reform Approach to Poverty

From the late 1800s to the 1930s, the moral classification of men's poverty persisted. But with the onset of the Great Depression, many old-stock white men suddenly found themselves jobless because of economic conditions beyond their control. In the Spring of 1929, immediately before the Depression, 2.86 million individuals were unemployed in the United States. By 1933, the number had reached 15 million (Handell, 1982, p. 13 ). As competition for available jobs intensified, wages and salaries fell. Banks and other financial institutions were in severe trouble, with some collapsing all together. The scope of the economic decline was unprecedented, with many "solid citizens" joining the ranks of the poor (Handell, 1982, p. 13 ).

In 1932, newly elected President Franklin Delano Roosevelt launched his famous New Deal program to provide a variety of temporary work relief and emergency assistance programs. The Federal Emergency Relief Act, the Civilian Conservations Corps, the Civil Works Administration, and the Works Progress Administration were but a few of the various programs and agencies established to deal with the Depression. The federal government began to

assume a larger responsibility for social insurance, one that eventually led to a permanent role in public welfare.

However, the gendered based solutions to poverty, of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were carried forward in the New Deal. The mothers' pension concept which was federalized in Title IV of the Social Security Act of 1935 reinforced women's dependency and subordination.

Women's dependency was etched in national policy and bound that dependency to discretionary regulation of mother's world. The Aid to Dependent Children program allowed the states to establish criteria, thus permitting continued regulation of women's personal lives. Such regulations often turned on racial considerations, most notable in the South, where criteria requiring suitability of the home and propriety of the parent allowed for discriminations in blacks' access to public assistance (Myrdal, 1962, p. 15).

Other New Deal measures, too, prescribed and enforced gender roles. The Sheppard-Towner Act was resurrected, revised, and expanded to include maternal and health provisions. Motherhood was the rationale for limiting women's access to waged work (Folbre, 1987, p. 477). In addition, the National Recovery Act set a lower minimum wage for women than for men (Scharf, 1980, p. 130). New Deal income security policy also provided for women's dependency when it granted unearned old-age security benefits to wives and widows of insured workers (Stevens, 1970, p. 117).

During the 1940s and 1950s, the insurance and welfare programs that had been established under the Roosevelt administration changed little. Welfare

programs were designed for white women who suddenly became heads of household due to the death of a spouse. All other women, including divorcees and especially women of color, were publicly scrutinized and deeply resented.

During the 1960s, President Johnson's "War on Poverty" program was yet another example of gender based legislation. Even its most innovative reforms did little to help poor women, because the reform embodied some of the same assumptions of the Male Pauper and Male Breadwinner models (Gordon, 1990, p. 43). The classic male pauper analysis assumes that the basic problem of poverty is the high rate of joblessness among poor men. Assumptions about masculinity have equally affected America's gendered welfare system. It has been unthinkable for able bodied male welfare recipients not to work. War on Poverty programs went forward premised by the notion that the overwhelming majority of those who needed jobs, and therefore needed the skills to obtain jobs, were men. Sargent Shriver (1964), contrasting the proposed War on Poverty with the then current programs, stated, "the price of not changing as (for the poor) continuous infancy, subservience and postponement of full responsibility and manhood" (Piven, 1991, p. 252). Women, on the other hand, had the primary role in caring or offering personal services and only a secondary role in financial provision to families (Saprio, 1990, p. 49). In part, the new War on Poverty programs did stimulate the economy, as tens of thousand of jobs were created to help the poor. However, most of the decent



jobs created went to middle-class social welfare professionals (Sidel, 1992, p. 49).

During the seventies and the eighties some groups which had historically experienced disproportionate rates of poverty were able to lift themselves out of poverty due to postwar economic growth or by the development of targeted social programs. Older Americans, whose poverty frequently occurred because of a health crisis or the lack of housing and inadequate Social Security, were allocated social Medicare benefits, housing targeted especially for the elderly and broadened indexed Social Security benefits (Funciello, 1993 , p. 23).

In contrast, between 1970 and 1984 the number of families in poverty headed by women escalated from 5.5 million in 1970 to 9.9 million in 1984, an increase of 80 percent. In 1988, 5.9 percent of households maintained by men or married couples were poor as compared to 10.4 percent of all American families. However, 33.5 percent of women maintained households were poor. Households maintained by men or married couples alone were the only family type that experienced a decrease in poverty despite the recession (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989).

From 1981-1989, during President Reagan's administration, economic policies, particularly cutbacks in human services, reinforced negative attitudes toward poor men and women. Since 1981, there have been significant cuts in Medicaid, in maternal and child health programs, and in funds for community

health centers and family planning programs (Sidel, 1992, p. 19). Aid to Families with Dependent Children programs were slashed a total of over \$2 billion (Children's Defense Budget, 1983, p. 212). Additionally, child nutrition programs were cut drastically in 1981. The food stamp program was cut sharply in the 1982 year and in fiscal year 1983 as well; total cuts exceeded \$2 billion a year (Children's Defense Budget, 1983, p. 224). Federal funds for day care were cut in the fiscal year of 1982, and Title XX under which federal funds paid for all or part of licensed child-care centers and homes, was replaced by a Social Services Block grant. Funding was reduced 21 percent, and the requirements that the states supply \$1 for every \$3 in federal money was eliminated (Children's Defense Budget, 1983, p. 134). In the area of employment and training, the Reagan administration eliminated all training and employment programs under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), reduced funding for the Youth Employment Program by 20 percent, and added "workfare" requirements under Aid to Families with Dependent Children (Children's Defense Budget, 1983, p. 153). Women constitute the majority of beneficiaries of most major social welfare programs and are still suffering from the severe cutbacks of social service programs during the eighties (Gordon, 1990, p. 13 ).

### The Welfare Solution

In 1983, the federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children, AFDC, statute began to embody a different notion of what kind of work was required from single mothers in return for welfare. In response to growing public dissatisfaction over the rising welfare caseload, one which coincided with a rapid increase in married white women's participation in the paid labor force, Congress amended the statute to provide greater economic incentives for maternal labor force participation and to mandate that some women would be required to participate in work training programs (Gordon, 1990, p. 10).

To date, AFDC is an income support program that responds to immediate financial hardship. It embodies a commitment to support a subgroup of the poor that was, at one time, thought blameless: low-income families with young children and a missing or financially incapacitated breadwinner. To qualify for benefits, a family must show that it has virtually no assets, that it has very low income (each state sets its own eligibility ceiling), and that a child in the family is deprived of at least one parent's support because the parent is not living with the child, incapacitated, or a recently unemployed primary breadwinner (DeLong & Levine, 1996).

AFDC is California's largest welfare program. As of December 1995, the number of people who received AFDC in California, at anytime during the year 1995, totaled 2,657,878. The number of children totaled 1,822,937. Total AFDC cases were 907,406, with 746,454 cases from single parent families and

160,952 cases from two parent families. The average monthly AFDC grant for a family of three was \$607 (California Department of Social Services, 1996, p. 4).

During the 1993 fiscal year, nationwide AFDC caseloads averaged 4,981,300 families per month and 14,144,315 recipients per month. Benefit expenditures totaled \$22.5 billion. The average monthly benefit per family was \$326.70 and average monthly benefit per recipient was \$132.64 (CDSS, 1996, p. 4).

California accounts for 27 percent of all money spent nationwide on the AFDC program, and 17 percent of the nation's AFDC caseload, although it has only 12 percent of the nation's total population. In 1995-96, AFDC grants in California are projected to total \$6 billion, \$2.9 billion from the state General Fund, \$3.0 billion in federal funds and \$143 million in county funds. California's county Welfare Departments will spend \$718 million to administer the AFDC program, including \$311 million in federal funds, \$295 million in State funds and \$112 million in county funds (CDSS, 1996, p. 4).

In 1994, California Governor Wilson attributed the increase in spending to the following factors: increases in the number of women of childbearing age; increases in the proportion of women having children; increases in out-of-wedlock births, especially to teen mothers; increases in the cost of medical care; and the lack of work incentives in the AFDC program (Rank, 1995, p. 58).

Governor Wilson's summary did not include the disproportionate number of low paying jobs going to women or the fact that women have never been compensated for childcare and domestic labor.

Indeed, much of California's welfare expenditure goes to AFDC. But, AFDC is a program founded on the principle that the norm is for mothers and children to be supported by men; that norm is, of course, the product of our particular sex/gender system. A different sex/gender system might require men and women to share in childcare and in earning; yet another might assume that the state should take all responsibility for the financial support of children. Most welfare programs have been designed to shore up male breadwinner families or to compensate, temporarily for their collapse (Gordon, 1990, p. 13). The traditional model of the male as the sole breadwinner not only places too much power in his hands; it also places too much pressure on his shoulders. As so many families have found, more flexible participation from men and women in all spheres of life enriches individuals, their children, and society at large (Sapiro, 1990, p. 40).

## CHAPTER 3

### STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL POVERTY DEBATES

Poverty in America in the early 1990s remains relatively high. It is high relative to what it was in the early 1970s. It is high relative to what analysts expected, given the economic recovery of the 1980s (Blank & Blinder, 1986). It is high relative to other countries that have similar standards of living (Smeeding, 1992). The poverty rates for some groups including minorities, elderly widows, and children living in mother only families are about as high today as was the poverty rate for all Americans in 1949 (Danziger & Weinberg, 1994). The fact that poverty in 1993 was higher than it was in 1973 represents an American anomaly. For the first time in recent history, a generation of children has a higher poverty rate than the preceding generation (Danziger & Weinberg, 1994).

In addition, earnings inequality and income inequality increased during the 1980s. The gap between the earnings of less skilled workers and college graduates widened dramatically as did the gaps between the family incomes of the poor and the rich and of the middle class and the rich (Danziger & Weinberg, 1994). If the incomes of all American families had grown at the same moderate rate as did the median, poverty in 1992 would have been somewhat below the 1973 rate. If the poverty rate in 1992 was at its 1973 level, there

would be 8.7 million fewer poor Americans. There would be 28.2 million poor individuals not the 1992 rate of 36.9 million (U.S. Census Bureau 1992a).

Furthermore, poverty rates rose more during the 1973-1975 recession than they fell during the ensuing recovery. In the early 1990s, poverty again increased because of recession. Whereas the income gains in previous recoveries had been widely shared across demographic groups, those of the recovery of the 1980s were highly concentrated among the most advantaged (Danziger & Weinberg, 1994). Groups with below average incomes and relatively high poverty rates benefitted the least. The young gained less than the old. The less educated workers gained less than more educated workers. Single parent families with children gained less than two-parent families. Minorities gained less than whites (Danziger & Weinberg, 1994). Economist Robert Lampman (1971), writing over two decades ago, expected the elimination of poverty under its official definition would have been achieved by 1980. Given the conditions of the economy in the recent past, this goal will not be achieved anytime soon if current economic, demographic, and public policy trends persist.

#### Trends in Family Income, Inequality, and Poverty

Poverty rates vary widely by race and ethnicity, by age, and by gender. In any year, non-Hispanic whites have lower poverty rates than blacks, Hispanics,

and other minorities. Men have lower poverty rates than women. Prime age adults have lower poverty rates than children and the elderly. Married couple families have lower poverty rates than female headed families (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1991a). All of these demographic disparities in poverty rates, with one major exception, have persisted over the past fifty years. The major exception is that until 1973 the poverty rate for the elderly was substantially higher than the rate for children. Since 1973, the poverty rate for the elderly has been lower and is now substantially lower than the rate for children (Ross, Danziger, & Smolensky, 1988).

Column one of Table 3.1 presents the 1990 poverty rates for persons by race and ethnicity, white, non-Hispanics, black non-Hispanics, Hispanics, and persons of other races. The Current Population Survey (CPS) does not have a sample large enough to estimate group specific poverty rates for persons who report their race as other, for example Asian Americans and American Indians. It also classifies poverty for persons by age, children, nonelderly adults, and the elderly. Columns two and three categorizes these groups further according to whether they live in a household headed by a man or by a woman with no spouse present.



**Table 3.1****Percentage of person in poverty within selected demographic groups, 1990**

	All Persons (1)	Persons living in households headed by Men (2)	Women, no spouse present (3)
<b>White, non-Hispanic</b>			
Children	12.4%	7.2%	41.2%
Nonelderly Adults	7.3%	5.1%	19.0%
Elderly	9.5%	4.5%	19.9%
<b>Black non-Hispanic</b>			
Children	44.4%	19.4%	65.0%
Nonelderly Adults	24.2%	14.7%	38.4%
Elderly	33.4%	24.7%	44.9%
<b>Hispanic</b>			
Children	35.1%	24.6%	68.7%
Nonelderly Adults	21.3%	16.8%	40.6%
Elderly	21.0%	14.9%	35.4%
<b>Other Races</b>			
Children	22.3%	16.3%	51.4%
Nonelderly Adults	12.0%	9.4%	24.7%
Elderly	14.8%	13.0%	19.1%
Total	13.5%	8.1%	33.1%

Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of the Census, March 1991.

Note: Persons under the age of 18 are classified as children; those over 64, as elderly; and those 18-64, as nonelderly adults.

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Holding marital status and race/ethnicity constant, the elderly, over age 64, have lower poverty rates than do children, under age 18. Poverty rates vary to a greater extent by race/ethnicity and by marital status than they do

by age. For example, the poverty rate for elderly non-Hispanics who live in households headed by males, 4.5 percent, is less than that of similar white children, 7.2 percent. But the rate for these white children is much lower than the poverty rate for persons living in households headed by elderly women. At the same time, the poverty rate for white children living in female headed families 41.2 percent, is much higher than the rate for minority children living in married couple families.

The differences in poverty rates indicated in table 3.1 can be traced to differences in income sources. The well being of children and nonelderly adults is primarily determined by real wage rates and unemployment rates. The well being of the elderly has become increasingly dependent on inflation adjusted government benefits, mainly social insurance transfers. Social insurance transfers include social security, railroad retirement, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, government employee pensions, and veterans' pensions and compensation. Minorities fare less well than white non-Hispanics because of the lower wage rates and higher unemployment rates that minorities experience. Female-headed families fare worse than married couple families because women often earn less than men, because these families have fewer wage earners, and because their government benefits, not adjusted to inflation, have declined in the last two decades.

Table 3.2 provides demographic detail on the composition of the United States poor from 1960-1990. The percentage of all poor persons who fall into various demographic groups at the beginning of each of the four most recent decades is presented. Also indicated are the corresponding poverty rates for each of these groups. Even though poverty rates of whites are much lower than those of black and Hispanics, most poor persons are white. Hispanics as a share of all poor persons have doubled between 1970 and 1990 to about 18 percent. Blacks have composed about 30 percent of the poor over the last three decades. The data in Table 3.2, from published Census reports, do not represent mutually exclusive categories, because Hispanics can be of any race. Thus the published data show that about two-thirds of all the poor are white.

**Table 3.2**  
Profile of the poverty population, 1960-1990

	Percentage of the poor population				Percentage Poor			
	1960	1970	1980	1990	1960	1970	1980	1990
All Persons	100%	100%	100%	100%	22.2%	12.6%	13.0%	13.5%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>								
White	71.0	68.5	67.3	66.5	17.8	9.9	10.2	10.7
Black	29.0	30.0	29.3	29.3	55.9	33.5	32.5	31.9
Asian or Pacific Islander	-	-	-2.4	2.6	-	-	17.2	12.2
Amer. Indian, Eskimo or Aleut	-	1.2	1.2	1.9	-	38.3	27.5	30.9
Hispanic	-	8.5	11.9	17.9	-	24.3	25.7	28.1

<b>Family Structure</b>								
In all families	87.6	80.0	77.2	75.1	20.7	10.9	11.5	12.0
In families with a female household no spouse present	18.2	29.5	34.6	37.5	48.9	38.1	36.7	37.2
Unrelated Individuals	12.4	20.0	21.3	22.2	45.2	32.9	22.9	20.7
<b>Young and Old Related Children</b>								
under 18	43.4	40.3	38.0	37.9	26.5	14.9	17.9	19.9
Adults 65 and over	14.1	18.5	13.2	10.9	35.2	24.5	15.7	12.2
<b>Residence</b>								
Nonfarm	81.0	92.4	96.6	98.4	19.6	12.2	12.9	13.6
Farms	19.0	7.6	3.4	1.6	51.3	21.1	17.5	11.2
<b>In metropolitan areas</b>								
Central Cities	26.9	32.0	36.4	42.4	18.3	14.3	17.2	19.0
Suburbs	17.0	20.4	25.2	30.5	12.2	7.1	8.32	8.7
Outside metropolitan areas	56.1	47.6	38.4	27.0	33.2	17.0	15.4	16.3

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, series P-60, nos 68, 81, 102, 133, 175.

Note: Hispanics may be of any race; comparable statistics on non-Hispanics are not available.

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The composition of the poor has shifted away from persons living in married-couple families. Between 1960 and 1990, the percentage of the poor living in female-headed families with no spouse present doubled to about 38 percent. Although there have been dramatic changes in the poverty rate of

children and the elderly, their share of the total poor population has changed very little. The total number of children has fallen in recent years, while their poverty has risen. The elderly population has expanded while its poverty rate has fallen. Children make up nearly 40 percent of the poor and the elderly about 10 percent of the poor (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a).

In 1960 most poor persons (56 percent) lived outside of metropolitan areas, and about one-fifth lived on farms. By 1990 only about one-quarter of the poor lived outside of metropolitan areas and less than 2 percent lived on farms. The increase in the percentage of the poor who live in central cities from about one-quarter to about two-fifths of all the poor and the continuing high central city poverty rate have contributed to concerns about the concentration of poverty and the emergence of an urban underclass (Manski, 1994). In summary, since 1960, a greater proportion of the poor are Hispanics, unrelated individuals, persons living in female-headed families with no husband present, and residents of metropolitan areas.

### Real Wage Earnings

Danziger and Weinberg (1994) cite three major factors contributing to the very slow growth in average living standards and the rising earnings inequality and family income inequality. The first factor is economic. Real wages for less-skilled workers have fallen, and the gap between the wages of college

graduates and other workers has increased. Sources of this growing wage inequality include current technological changes which increase the demand for higher skilled and decreased the demand for less skilled workers. The continued transformation from an industrial to an information economy is likely to have further negative effects on less skilled workers. The second factor cited is government programs. They are no longer effective in reducing economic hardship because the benefit levels in some programs have not kept up with inflation and because changes in program rules have reduced recipients rates. The third factor is demographic. The composition of the population has shifted away from married couples families, who have lower than average poverty rates, toward female headed families and unrelated individuals, who have higher than average poverty rates.

Similar economic and demographic changes have occurred in most industrialized countries. Other industrialized nations such as Germany, England and Sweden, have done more than the United States to offset the rising economic hardship through expanded government social policies. Government can supplement low wages through an expanded earned income tax credit, can raise the minimum wage, can reform welfare and the child support system, can increase access to health care, and can raise workers' skills by expanding education, employment, and training opportunities (Danziger & Weinberg, 1994).

### The Culture of Poverty

On the other hand, there are scholars who have associated poverty with individual cultural deficiencies and not economic trends. Of the many theories or perspectives on poverty, perhaps none has elicited more controversy than what has been called "the culture of poverty." The term originated with anthropologist Oscar Lewis, who studied the poor in Mexico and Puerto Rico. He held that the patterns of life come to make up a unique lifestyle for the poor that contributes to the perpetuation of their poverty from generation to generation (Lewis, 1965, p. xiv).

The culture of poverty is both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified, highly individuated, capitalistic society. It represents an effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair which develop from the realization of the improbability of achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society (Lewis, 1965, p. xiv).

Cultural theorists feel poverty is an embedded culture from which there is no psychological relief (Sidel, 1992, p. 12). Those trapped in poverty may manifest patterns of behavior and values that are characteristically different from those of the dominant society and culture (Waxman, 1983, p. 1). Once people find themselves in poverty, their behavior and attitudes come to form a "deviant subculture" that is self-perpetuating or a "subculture of poverty" (Burton, 1992, p. 22).

People in poverty are said to have a weak family structure, ineffective interpersonal relations, present time orientation, and unrestrained spending patterns. They develop a "design for living" or a set of solution to their problems that is passed down from generation to generation. The culture of the poor has its own distinctive psychological consequences for its members, affecting the nature of kinship ties, spending patterns, value systems, and sense of community (Lewis, 1961, p. 16).

Sociologist, William Julius Wilson, in The Truly Disadvantaged (1987), found that of the 25,000 families with children living in low-income projects in Chicago, only eight percent were married-couple families, and eighty percent of the family households received welfare. Children from poor households headed by women tend to have lower abilities and fewer years of schooling. They have less desirable jobs and lower incomes and are more likely to form female-headed households themselves (Mare & Winship, 1991).

An important idea in the cultural view is that deeply ingrained habits prevent low-income people from taking advantage of improved circumstances; that is, people remain poor because they feel no obligation to contribute to society (Rosenbaum & Popkin, 1991). An explicit attack on the value system of the poor is made by Edward Banfield. In his book, The Unheavenly City: The Nature and Future of our Urban Crisis (1968), Banfield suggests that their impulsiveness and radical improvidence are explanations for their condition.



Their values include helplessness, dependence, a sense of inferiority, resignation, and fatalism. The poor are less interested in education and assign little value to work, sacrifice, or self-improvement. Other values include a low future orientation, inability to plan ahead, and a weak sense of personal efficacy. They are ambivalent toward authority but supportive of illegal activities (Corcoran et al., 1985). Micky Kaus (1986) speaks of people who won't climb the ladder of opportunity even when the economy or the government dangles it in front of their noses.

George Gilder in Wealth and Poverty (1981) believes that the poor are different, many are black, their I.Q.s are genetically lower, and they are markedly prone to violent, crime, and slovenly living (p. 64). Likewise, Larwence Mead refers to an element of the poor composed of street hustlers, welfare families, drug addicts, and former mental patients who will not take jobs, and adds that "in general, low income and serious behavior problems go together" (Mead, 1986, p. 22).

Not surprisingly, many writers consider such views as attacks on the poor and have argued against them. Garfinkel and Haveman (1988) show statistically that poverty is not the result of incompetence on the part of the poor. Their poverty is the result of characteristics of the labor market rather than the inadequacy of the poor.

Much research indicates that when welfare families are compared to nonpoor families of the same ethnic background, no significant cultural differences appear (Schiller, 1984, p. 104). The poor have demonstrated a marked ability to move out of poverty when economic opportunities have improved.

One of the key elements of the cultural view is that poverty is transmitted across generations, but there is very limited support to this claim. The Michigan panel Study of Income Dynamics (1987), reported by Julius Wilson, found that only three of every ten young adults reared in poverty homes, compare to one in ten reared in nonpoverty homes, went on to set up poverty households of their own.

There have been many case histories of poor people, and they effectively challenge the notion that social problems can be explained in terms of a self-perpetuating culture of poverty apart from specific patterns of economic deprivation (Sullivan, 1987). Many of the poor are individuals whose strong endorsement of mainstream values has not relieved their poverty.

Mary Corcoran, in "Myth and Reality: The Cause and Persistence of Poverty," raises a serious challenge to the view that the attitudes and motivations of the poor are the causes of their poverty. In her study, researchers found little evidence that distinctive psychological characteristics inhibit advancement among the poor or play a role in the transmission of poverty and

dependency from parents to children. Changes in economic circumstances lead to changes in psychological attitudes. In short, the economic status of the poor does not appear to have been caused by psychological disposition (Corcoran et al., 1985).

### Structural Conditions

To understand why so much poverty exists in the United States, the level of analysis must be shifted away from individuals to the social structure. Structural variables produce a high rate of poverty by circumscribing the choices available to each person (Beeghley and Chalfant 1985, p. xiv). The major determinants of poverty are found not in the characteristics of the poor themselves, but in the structural elements of the larger society. These include loss of jobs, the outflow of high-wage industries, insufficient wages, the agricultural crisis, and inflation (Appelbaum 1989; Wilkie 1991; Wilson 1987, pp. 39-55).

Sources of wage inequality include technological changes that have increased the demand for higher-skilled and decreased the demand for less skilled workers. Particularly hard hit have been workers with relatively low educational levels (Murmane, 1994). Since 1973 the wages of male high school dropouts and high school graduates have fallen steadily. In 1991 the average wage for male dropouts was 26 percent lower than in 1973. For male high school graduates, the decline was 21 percent. For females, whose

average wage at every point in time has been lower than that of comparably educated males, the declines were smaller, but still meant significant declines in living standards. The average wage of female high school dropouts in 1991 was 11 percent lower than in 1973, and for female high school graduates the comparable decline was 6 percent (Mishel & Bernstein, 1992).

The wages of college graduates were also lower in 1991 than in 1973, but this group fared considerably better than less-educated workers. Male college graduates experienced a 12 percent decline in average wages—less than half the decline of male high school dropouts—and the 1991 average wage of female college graduates was within 1 percent of its 1973 level (Mishel & Bernstein, 1992). As a result, the gap between the average wages of college graduates and high school graduates has increased markedly. In 1973, the average wage of male college graduates was 41 percent greater than the average for high school graduates. In 1991, the differential was 45 percent. For females, the comparable figures are 48 percent in 1973 and 56 percent in 1991. These wage trends, which to a large extent reflect long term changes in the structure of the economy, are likely to continue. High school drop outs and high school graduates will thus continue to fare poorly relative to workers with more education (Murmane, p. 292).

High school graduates' standard of living will depend to a large extent on their ability to find stable employment. Stable employment has proved difficult

for many young Americans. In 1988, 32 percent of male high school graduates ages twenty-nine to thirty-one had held their current job for less than one year. For male drop-outs, the comparable figure is 49 percent. The figures for women who did not leave the labor force to raise families are similar (Osterman, 1991).

Employment instability is costly. Male high school graduates ages twenty-nine to thirty-one who held the same job for three years or more earned an average hourly wage of \$11.15; it was \$6.68 for those with less than one year on the job (Osterman, 1991). Among the reasons for the differential is that workers with short spells of employment often receive less training from their employers than do long-term workers, and workers with more training tend to have higher wages. In most cases, women bear the responsibility of rearing children, therefore their employment history is sporadic, leading to lower hourly wages over long periods of time.

Economists, Bernstein and Mishel in "Trends in the Low-Wage Labor Market and Welfare Reform," examine data from the Current Population Survey prepared by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1991. The data clearly indicates that the hourly wages for all women between 1979 and 1989 have declined. The most severe wage loss was for African-American women with less than a high school education, who saw their hourly wages fall by over 20 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 1991a) In addition, most women have continued to lose ground in wages since 1989. Wage trends have

generally been more negative for women with less than twelve years of education. There is clear evidence that the supply of workers, women with less than twelve years of education, already exceeds the demand for their services (Bernstein & Mischel, 1994).

During the 1980s, when the economy was generating increasing hardship for the poor and less-skilled workers, the federal government was also cutting back substantially on its antipoverty and labor market programs. In 1980, federal spending on employment and training programs amounted to \$9.3 billion. By 1986, the spending had fallen to \$3.7 billion, and it remained at this level until 1992. In addition, legislated changes in unemployment insurance and welfare reduced the antipoverty effectiveness of the federal safety net (Danziger, Sandefur, & Weinberg, 1994. p. 3).

During the 1970s and 1980s, many policy makers held the belief that in time, in conjunction with a growing economy, employers would hire the poor. It has become apparent that holding the line on social spending and waiting for employers to hire the poor is not a viable antipoverty strategy (Danziger, Sandefur, & Weinberg, 1994. p. 3). The growing gap between wages of college graduates and high school drop outs or graduates suggests that poor and minority children, especially those with limited basic skills, will not do well in the labor market. There is evidence that community college training programs produce modest gains in earnings for mothers of welfare (Haveman, 1994).

The following chapter will present research that was conducted to examine the success of one government funded education and training program designed specifically to transition welfare mothers from welfare to work.

## CHAPTER 4

### De ANZA COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH PROJECT

Annually, in California, approximately 139,000 welfare recipients enroll in state community colleges. Of the 139,000 welfare recipients, 20,000 students are in the Greater Avenue for Independence (GAIN) Program, California's Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program (California State Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office, 1996). The GAIN program, California's welfare to work initiative, requires all single head of household, AFDC recipients, whose youngest child is three years of age or older to register and participate in a designated work related training program. However, according to federal legislation, if local resources are inadequate to provide necessary training resources such as childcare and training expenses, mandatory AFDC recipients are exempt from federal and local mandates (Danziger and Gottschalk, 1993, p. 4). In Santa Clara County during the 1995 fiscal year, from July 1-June 30, 1995, over 17,000 mandated AFDC welfare recipients were exempt from federal work participation requirements due to the depletion of local training related resources (GAIN Annual Report, 1996).

Virtually every ethnic, religious and cultural group is represented in Santa Clara County, with the four largest groups including white non-Hispanics (52%), Hispanics (21%), Asian or Pacific Islanders (17%) and African Americans (4%).



One out of every three county residents speaks a language other than English at home (Santa Clara County Department of Social Services, 1996). As of August, 1996 according to the Santa Clara County Department of Social Services, the break down of welfare population of Santa Clara County by ethnicity was as follows: 44.8 percent Hispanic, 19.2 percent Vietnamese, 19.2 percent white, 8.5 percent African American , 2.4 percent Cambodian, 1.1 percent Filipino, 0.8 percent Chinese, and 0.7 percent Indian/Alaskan.

Santa Clara County is the largest county in the San Francisco Bay Area in terms of population (1.6 million) and area (1,312 square miles). It is the fifth most populous county in the state of California (Santa Clara County Department of Social Services, 1996). The northern portion has a large concentration of technical, research and other computer related industries, with a highly educated and highly paid workforce. The central portion of the county is dominated by the valley's largest city, San Jose, with a large middle and lower-income population and the valley's major concentration of poverty. The southern portion is less affluent and more sparsely populated, with an economy and workforce still dominated by food production and processing. The southern region of the county has more in common with neighboring portions of Santa Cruz, San Benito and Monterey Counties than with the Silicon Valley cities to the North (Santa Clara County Department of Social Services, 1996). In Santa Clara County, about 9 percent of all (or 153,735) people currently receive some

type of public assistance. This includes 73, 500 people, primarily children and mothers caring for them, who rely on AFDC cash aid for their means of support. About half of the adults receiving AFDC in Santa Clara County, lack a high school diploma or equivalent. While 21 percent of the current AFDC households have someone working at least part-time, about half have no record of employment in the past two years. Moreover, approximately, 44 percent of all AFDC clients have been on aid longer than five years (Santa Clara County Department of Social Services, 1996).

Although De Anza College is located in the richest northern area of the county, where the unemployment rate is well below the state and federal rates at 3.7%, the gap between rich and poor is evident (Santa Clara County Department of Social Services, 1996). The gap between the rich and the poor has been exacerbated by the special problems of the single-parent families, the growing reliance on temporary employment, and the high cost of living in Santa Clara County. A preliminary report completed in August, 1996 by Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) estimates that a family's self-sufficiency wage standard in Santa Clara County for two adults and one preschooler is \$34, 938 per year.

William Julius Wilson, in the San Jose Mercury News article, October 7, 1996, " Why Urban Poverty, is an Issue to Everyone," was asked the following question by a local reporter, "The national unemployment rate is hovering

around 5 percent. In California, the unemployment rate is 7 percent and in Silicon Valley its just over 3.5 percent. Of course, not everyone is benefitting, but who isn't and why can't they find jobs?" Wilson responded,

The unemployment rate only reflects those who are still in the labor market. It does not include those who have dropped out of the labor market. ....This tight labor market situation really does benefit those minorities who are still in the labor market. But in order to draw those who have dropped out of the labor market, particularly those who live in the inner city ghettos, we would have to have sustained a tight labor market for 10 to 15 years. What follows after a period of low unemployment is that we have a recession wipe out the gains people experience during the recovery period. That has been our history. It would be great if we could sustain this tight labor market. I wouldn't be so worried.

Wilson's comments underscore the need to acknowledge those in poverty who are not reflected in current unemployment statistics. Although De Anza college is located in a relatively high income area, it had the largest enrollment of GAIN participants in community colleges countywide (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1**  
Enrollment in GAIN at Santa Clara County Community Colleges, 1995-96  
Vocational Education

Overall Participation	100%	
Community Colleges		
De Anza	32%	(161)
Evergreen	16%	( 83)
Foothill	1%	( 10)
Gavilan	2%	( 21)
Mission	21%	(109)
San Jose	17%	( 88)
West Valley	11%	( 47)

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Source: Santa Clara County, Employment Support Initiative, 1996  
N=519

De Anza College served 1,048 students receiving various types of government assistance during the 1995-1996 academic year. Of the 1,048 recipients, 428 received welfare cash benefits. The breakdown for the remainder of government assistance recipients was as follows: 150 received food stamps only, 646 received medical, 12 received general assistance, 3 received foster care and 3 transitional medical (Santa Clara County Department of Social Services, 1996). The De Anza College GAIN program officially registered 161 participants during the 1995-96 academic year.

De Anza Community College has administered vocational training programs designed to assist welfare recipients to return or enter work for the first time in full-time employment since 1971 (De Anza College Catalogue, 1995-96, p. 7). The research in this chapter will focus on GAIN participants. The selection of the sample represents 161 single women on welfare, enrolled

at De Anza College during the 1995-1996 academic year, June 28, 1995 to June 26, 1996.

### California's Community College System

California's Community Colleges offer relatively free educational opportunities for economically and academically disadvantaged populations. The community college mission statement outlined by the Chancellor's office of statewide community colleges asserts that the community college "primary" educational priority is in degree and certificate programs in lower division arts and sciences areas and vocational and occupational fields. This is critical to the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program, because all GAIN participants must be enrolled in a vocational program which will lead to unsubsidized employment in a relative short period of time not to exceed two years.

According to the Chancellor's office of statewide community colleges remedial (precollegiate and/or basic skills) instruction, English as a Second Language (ESL), adult education, and support services are essential and deemed important to students' retention and completion standards. During the 1995-96 academic year, 89 percent of the GAIN student population (Table 4.2) was enrolled concurrently in basic skills and vocational education. In addition, 12 percent of the GAIN population was enrolled concurrently in ESL instruction

and vocational education. Since the majority of the students lacked reading, writing, and mathematical skills, college support services designed to assist the academically disadvantaged student were essential to the students' continuation and completion of vocational training.

**Table 4.2**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Basic Skills and Vocational Education

Overall Percentage	89%	(143)
Race/Ethnicity		
White	49%	(70)
African American	26%	(37)
Mexican American	25%	(36)
Vietnamese		
Filipino		
American Indian		

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N=161

Eligibility for the GAIN program was determined by the Santa Clara County Department of Social Services. All eligible participants must have been receiving cash aid, Aid to Families with Dependence (AFDC) to qualify for GAIN services. Therefore, college support services designed to assist the economically disadvantaged student were as important as those set up to help students improve basic skills.

Support programs designed to assist academically disadvantaged students included tutorial, counseling, and career services. The tutorial center

offered tutoring in most academic subjects. Tutoring was available from qualified tutors during the day and evening. The counseling center provided a comprehensive service for students who sought assistance in dealing with a variety of concerns. Academic advisors assisted with academic advisement and counselors provided educational, personal, and career counseling (De Anza College Catalogue, 1995-96, p. 11 ).

Moreover, the career planning and placement center provided a focal point for students exploring career options, researching the labor market trends, investigating local employers, and seeking employment opportunities. The center offered assistance in defining career objectives based on factual information about the world of work and an understanding of personal interests and marketable skills as well as actual job referral and placement. Resources and services included workshops for job seeking students, a career resource library, job application forms, employer literature, and job placement (De Anza College Catalogue, 1995-96, p. 14).

Due to GAIN students limited economic resources, support programs set up to help students financially were critical to students' success. These programs included the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), the Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) program, and the Financial Aid program.

EOPS provided support services for economically and academically disadvantaged students. Services included academic and personal counseling; peer advising; assistance in completing admission, registration and financial aid forms; priority registration; university transfer services; and referral to on and off campus support agencies (De Anza College Catalogue, 1995-96, p. 12).

CARE provided support services to single heads of households receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Participants received academic and personal counseling, peer advising, priority registration and financial assistance with child care, books and transportation (De Anza College Catalogue, 1995-96, p. 11).

Financial aid was available through the college for students who needed financial support in order to pursue their college education. The college provided assistance in the form of grants, scholarships, loans, and part time jobs. Grants included the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant Program (SEOG), the Federal Pell Grant, the Extended Opportunity Program Grant (EOPG), the Board of Governors Fee Waivers (BOGW), Cal Grant A, Cal Grant B, Cal Grant C, and the Federal Work Study Program (FWSP). Grants ranged from \$100 to \$4,000 per academic year (De Anza College Catalogue, 1995-96, p. 10).



The Santa Clara County GAIN program provided childcare and transportation provisions to all GAIN participants. Childcare was by far the most costly support service. For a single mother with one child ages 2 to 5 years, weekly childcare rates were \$138.45. Assuming the mother was in training for twelve consecutive months, the childcare bill would run approximately \$6636 annually. According to the participant demographics, 49 percent of the mothers had two children (Table 4.4 ). Therefore, the average annual cost for childcare would run \$13,272. Transportation payments totaling \$33. were mailed to each participant on a monthly basis. Due to the high cost of childcare and limited resources, the Santa Clara County GAIN program was unable to serve approximately 17,000 AFDC recipients during the 1995 fiscal year (Santa Clara County Department of Social Services, 1996). Furthermore, over 50 percent of the GAIN program participants had been waiting approximately one year to enroll in a community college vocational training program approved by the county of social services.

Because of the complexity of policies, regulations, and eligibility criteria of college and local county programs, additional community college staffing was necessary to coordinate and implement a comprehensive delivery system. The operating budget of De Anza Community College GAIN program during the 1995-1996 year was \$124,000, including \$64,000 from the local Santa Clara County Department of Social Services and \$60,000 from the Foothill-De Anza

Community College District general fund. The staffing cost per participant averaged less than \$125. The Coordinator of the program was designated student liaison to provide on-going communication between the Department of Social Services and the Community College. A half-time enrollment technician assisted GAIN students with priority class registration and expedited students registration and tuition financial obligations. Interpretation and implementation of federal, state, and local policy was a joint effort by both the department of social service administrators and community college personnel. The GAIN coordinator and enrollment technician salaries encompassed \$64,000 of the total \$124,000 budget. A part-time academic, personal, and vocational counselor provided on-going support services to all GAIN participants. Professional counseling accounted for \$60,000 of the total budget.

#### Methodology and Empirical Data Collection

One hundred and sixty-one single female head of household welfare recipients were enrolled at De Anza Community College during the 1995-1996 academic year. Demographic research data was compiled from an intake questionnaire administered by the GAIN coordinator. All information requested was discussed with the participant at the time of enrollment. Clarification, if asked, to all questions was made available to participants. At the point of enrollment, questions included the race/ethnicity (Table 4.3a and 4.3b), age

(Table 4.4), number of dependents (Table 4.5), years on welfare (Table 4.6), current educational obtainment (Table 4.7), age of youngest depended child (Table 4.8), recent work history (Table 4.9), and the identification of learning disabilities (Table 4.10) of each participant. All tables include not only the general population characteristics but are also broken down further according to race/ethnicity percentages.

**Table 4.3a**  
**Percentage of total AFDC Cases in Santa Clara County by Ethnicity**

<u>All</u>	100%
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic	42.3%
Vietnamese	19.2%
White	19.2%
African American	8.5%
Cambodian	2.4%
Filipino	1.1%
Indian/Alsatian	0.7%

Ethnicity terms derived from Santa Clara County Department of Social Services.

**Table 4.3b**  
**Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96**

<u>All</u>	100%
Race/Ethnicity	
White	55% (88)
African American	16% (26)
Mexican American	19% (31)
Vietnamese	7% (11)
Filipina	1% (2)
American Indian	2% (3)

N=161

Ethnicity terms derived from De Anza Community College Intake Questionnaire.

**Table 4.4**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96

<u>Age</u>	Youth	21-25	25-35	35-45	45+
Overall Percentage	11% (18)	24% (39)	45% (72)	19% (3)	1% (2)
Race/Ethnicity					
White	35% (6)	56% (22)	57% (41)	44% (1.4)	50% (1)
African American	18% (3)	15% (6)	20% (14)	17% (.5)	
Mexican American	41% (7)	26% (10)	12% (9)	28% (.8)	50% (1)
Vietnamese	6% (1)	3% (1)	7% (5)	11% (.3)	
Filipina			1% (1)		
American Indian			3% (2)		

N=161

**Table 4.5**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96

	<u>Number of Dependent Children</u>			
	One	Two	Three	Four+
Overall Percentage	32% (52)	49% (79)	13% (21)	6% (9)
Race/Ethnicity				
White	60% (31)	52% (41)	47% (10)	22% (2)
African American	17% (9)	14% (11)	24% (5)	22% (2)
Mexican American	13% (7)	24% (19)	19% (4)	45% (4)
Vietnamese	8% (4)	9% (7)	5% (1)	11% (1)
Filipina	2% (1)			
American Indian		1% (1)	5% (1)	

N=161

**Table 4.6**  
Percentage of GAIN students enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Years on AFDC

	-One	Two	Three	Five+	Ten+	Fifteen+	Twenty+
Overall Percentage	9% (15)	28% (45)	38% (61)	18% (29)	4% (6)	2% (3)	1% (2)
Race/Ethnicity							
White	50% (7.5)	44% (20)	61% (37)	55% (16)	23% (1)	66% (2)	
African American	22% (3.5)	16% (7)	11% (7)	14% (4)	33% (2)		50%(1)
Mexican American	14% (2)	29% (13)	18% (11)	28% (8)	17% (1)	34% (1)	50%(1)
Vietnamese	14% (2)	11% (5)	7% (4)				
Filipina			3% (2)				
American Indian			3% (1)	26%(2)			

N=161

**Table 4.7**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Current Education

	GED	HSD	HSE	HSDrop	CD
Overall Percentage	36% (57)	52% (84)	.5% (1)	11% (18)	.5% (1)
Race/Ethnicity					
White	52% (30)	48% (40)	100% (1)		100% (1)
African American	14% (8)	22% (18)		50% (9)	
Mexican American	27% (15)	16% (13)		50% (9)	
Vietnamese	4% (2)	13% (11)			
Filipina		1% (2)			
American Indian	3% (2)				

N=161

**Table 4.8**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Age of Youngest Dependent Child

	Under Three	Over Three
Overall Percentage	32% (52)	68% (109)
Race/Ethnicity		
White	51% (27)	55% (60)
African American	18% ( 9)	15% (16)
Mexican American	29% (15)	17% (19)
Vietnamese	2% ( 1)	10% (11)
Filipina		1% ( 1)
American Indian		2% ( 2)

N=161

**Table 4.9**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Employment History

	None	One Year	Two Year	Three Year+
Overall Percentage	62% (100)	28%(45)	6% (10)	4% (6)
Race/Ethnicity				
White	58% (58)	45% (20)	70% ( 7)	50% (3)
African American	21% (21)	13% ( 6)	5% (.5)	15% (1)
Mexican American	15% (15)	26% (12)	15% (1.5)	35% (2)
Vietnamese	4% ( 4)	13% ( 6)	7% ( .5)	
Filipina		3% (.5)		
American Indian		2% ( 1)		

N=161

**Table 4.10**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Learning Disabilities

Overall Percentage	12%	(19)
Race/Ethnicity		
White	55%	(10)
African American	27%	(5)
Mexican American	18%	(4)
Vietnamese		
Filipina		
American Indian		

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N=161

The statistical breakdown by race/ethnicity, in the population according to age, number of dependents, years on welfare, current educational obtainment, age of children, and recent work history, and learning disabilities indicated that there was not a significant difference in the population according to race/ethnicity background. The race/ethnicity statistical data collected in this study contradicts the common, widespread belief that minorities lack American values, especially the importance of education and the work ethic of the American culture. George Gilder (1981), described the majority of the poor as black with genetically lower I.Q.s. In 1968, Edward Banfield concluded that the poor lacked American values. He declared that the poor were less interested in education and assigned little value to work, sacrifice, or self-improvement. The race/ethnicity and overall research data presented in this chapter refutes the accusations constructed by popular culture of poverty theorists including Gilder and Banfield.

The overall composition of De Anza College's GAIN student profile is similar to that of welfare recipients nationwide. Although, the poverty rates of whites are much lower than those of African Americans and Mexican Americans, most poor persons are white. Over 50 percent of the students participating in De Anza College's GAIN program from 1995-1996 were white, 19 percent Mexican American, 16 percent African American, 7 percent Vietnamese, 2 percent American Indian, and 1 percent Filipina (Table 4.3).

#### Program Requirements and Outcomes

At the time of enrollment all participants were required to take community college assessment tests which scored them accordingly to reading, writing and mathematical ability. These scores assisted in the development of an educational plan. Educational plans were developed for all of the 161 GAIN students. Vocational training areas needed authorization from the local Department of Social Services. Only those training areas with a local labor market need were approved. Vocational training programs included Accounting, Administrative Assistant, Administration of Justice, Biotechnology, Child Development, Computer Graphics, Environmental Studies, Health Technology, and Paralegal (Table 4.11a and 4.11b).



**Table 4.11a**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Vocational Programs, Highest Enrollment

	Accounting	Administrative Assist.	Health Tech.	Paralegal
Overall Percentage	10% (16)	24% (39)	44% (70)	12% (19)
Race/Ethnicity				
White	50% (8)	53% (20)	40%(28)	81% (15)
African American	12.5% (2)	28% (11)	18% (12)	6% (1.5)
Mexican American	25% (4)	17% (7)	29% (20)	13% (2.5)
Vietnamese	12.5% (2)	2% (1)	10% (7)	
Filipina			1% (1)	
American Indian			2% (2)	

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N=161

**Table 4.11b**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Vocational Programs, Lowest Enrollment

	Admin/Just.	BioTech.	Child Dev.	Computer Graph.	Environment.	Undec.
Overall Percentage	1% (2)	.5% (1)	5%(8)	1% (2)	.5% (1)	2% (3)
Race/Ethnicity						
White	100% (2)	57% (5)	50% (1)	100% (1)	60% (2)	
African American			28% (2)	50% (1)	40% (1)	
Mexican American	100% (1)	15% (1)				
Vietnamese						
Filipina						
American Indian						

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N=161

GAIN participants were required to enroll and complete twelve units with a 2.0 or better Grade Point Average (GPA) each quarter. Due to the overwhelming demands of single parenting, the full-time academic requirement proved difficult for many of the participants and their families. Early intervention and on-going communication with college instructors and GAIN casemanagers was extremely important. During the 1995-1996 academic year, Santa Clara

County GAIN workers evaluated each participant's progress on a routine basis for participation requirements. Numerous case conferences and on site progress evaluations including the GAIN participant, the GAIN casemanager and the college GAIN liaison and/or counselor were conducted. At times, modifications to educational plans and employment goals were necessary. The changes needed to adhere to county regulations. Working as a team, the participant, the college and county staff were able to communicate personal and realistic program goals and develop a plan which met the needs of both the participant and the GAIN program.

Additional data including drop-out, retention, and completion rates was compiled on an on-going as needed basis during the 1995-1996 academic year (Table 4.12). Of the total population, 37 percent had successfully completed a vocational training program, while 51 percent intended to continue and complete their training program during the 1996-1997 academic year. Five percent of the population discontinued training and became employed full-time. Due to individual circumstances, including health problems, family and childcare needs, 7 percent did not finish their training component and were not re-enrolled nor working.

**Table 4.12**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Completions

	All	C/E	C/NE	NC/E	NC/NE	Cont
Overall Percentage	100%	13%(21)	24% (39)	5% (8)	7% (11)	51% (82)
Race/Ethnicity						
White		55% (11.5)	60% (23)	48% (4)	66% (7)	55% (45)
African American		16% (3)	10% (4)	18% (1)		27% (22)
Mexican American		19% (4)	20% (8)	21% (2)	23% (3)	18% (15)
Vietnamese		7% (1)	10% (4)	13% (1)	11% (1)	
Filipina		1% (.5)				
American Indian		2% (1)				

N=161

Accounting, Administrative Assistant, and Health Technology training programs accounted for all of the 13 percent that completed and were working full-time in their vocational area. An overwhelming 67% who completed were from the Health Technology program (Table 4.14). Health Technology programs included Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Home Health Aid (HHA), Acute Care Nursing Assistant (ACNA), EKG Technician, Phlebotomist, Medical Reception, Medial Transcription, Insurance and Coding, Medical Assistant, and Lab Assistant.

**Table 4.13**  
Percentage of GAIN participants enrolled at De Anza College, 1995-96  
Vocational Program

	All	C/E	C/NE	NC/E	NC/NE	Cont
Overall Percentage	100%	13%(21)	24% (39)	5% (8)	7% (11)	51% (82)
Accounting		11%(2)	12% (5)			10% (8)
Administrative Assistant		17%(4)	34% (13)	50% (4)	40%(4.5)	15% (12)

	C/E	CNE	NCE	NCNE	Cont
Administration of Justice		5% (8)			1% (1)
Biotechnology					1% (1)
Child Development					10% (8)
Computer Graphics					1% (1)
Environmental Studies					1% (1)
Health Technology	67% (14)	40% (16)	50% (4)	20% (2)	22% (18)
Paralegal	5% (1)	14% (5)		40% (4.5)	40% (33)

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N=161

Work experience, including internships and externships, were required prior to the completion of any Health Technology certificate program. The Committee for Economic Development, 1991 reported that reliability is at the top of employers' list of the attributes they want in new employees. In addition to coming to work on time every day, employers wanted workers who follow directions and get along with their co-workers. Paid and non-paid internships provided the GAIN students with on the job site training and realistic work environment expectations. Internships certainly seem critical to student success. There is a strong correlation between prior work experience and employment opportunities. Many skills, including the ability to communicate clearly, write well, and work with other people, are primary determinants of productivity in many jobs (Murmane, 1992, p. 261).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) literacy and mathematics assessments show strong relationships between family

background and children's skills. For example, parents' educational attainments are strong predictors of their children's literacy and mathematical skills (Dossey et al., 1988). Several factors seem responsible for this correlation: parents' educational attainments are strongly associated with the availability of literacy materials in the home, the probability that children will choose a college-preparatory curriculum in high school and children's educational attainments (Levy & Murmane, 1992, p. 295).

Murmane's research confirms the importance of basic education and vocational training programs for single women. Many of the GAIN participants, just after two weeks of formal instruction, noted a significant increase not only in their own self-esteem but their children as well. The structure and sense of productivity among single mothers had a positive effect on many family members notably pre-school and elementary school age children. Statistically, it is evident that the overwhelming majority of welfare women in the De Anza Community College vocational training program desire education and respectable jobs.

The coordination of college services was vital to the retention and completion of program participants. Although only 19 participants identified themselves as learning disabled in the initial intake session (Table 4.10), over twice that amount received services from the Education Diagnostic Center, EDC, and Career Development Employment Program, CDEP, programs during

the 1995-1996 academic year. The EDC assisted students in discovering their learning styles, academic strengths and weaknesses, and whether or not they had a learning disability. EDC offered basic skills courses in reading, writing, and mathematics. In addition, it taught students how to compensate for different learning styles. CDEP offered classes in vocation evaluation, career assessment, and job seeking skills.

During the 1995-1996 academic year, three advisory committees made up of professionals and private industries were established to guide in curriculum development. The three committees included the Health Technology, the Acute Care Nursing Assisting (ACNA), and the Occupational Training Institute (OTI), employer advisory board. OTI's advisory committee included members from the North Valley (NOVA) Private Industry Council, Independent Contractors, Advanced Micro Devices, Accountemps, National Integration Company, Technical Recruiters and Consultants, Midpeninsula Hospice and Homecare and De Anza College's Center for Applied Competitive Technology.

Local industry partnerships between the community college and prospective community employers is fundamental to participants' success in securing employment. However, a significant proportion of adults lack threshold levels of problem-solving skills that are crucial in adapting to new technology and in learning the skills needed in new jobs. The quality of

available workers may influence private industries decisions about whether to invest in worker training programs (Bluestone, 1996).

Coordination of not only college but community resources, as well, proved important for participants who did not have a sound support system. Many students due to lack of community resources were unable to complete vocational training programs on time. Of the continuing total participant population, 51 percent, 24 percent needed to request extensions to complete their program. In many individual cases, time extensions were granted due to class and work experience availability. Others required extensions, due to additional basic skills courses that were needed as pre-requisites to educational goals.

#### Misinformation and Welfare Recipients

The data from De Anza College's GAIN program dispels many of the long standing myths about welfare recipients in general. Arguments that the poor do not want to work fare poorly when examined in the light of the program's research evidence. Of the one hundred and sixty-one female single-head of households welfare recipients, ages seventeen to forty-six, enrolled in vocational certificate programs, one hundred and fifty have either successfully completed their educational component, found jobs or are continuing their educational program (Table 4.12). Column two of Table 4.12 indicates 13

percent of GAIN participants in the De Anza Community College study, have completed a community college vocational certificate program are employed full-time, more than thirty-five hours per week, and are off of welfare. Column three indicates 24 percent have successfully completed and are currently pursuing job search activities. According to column four of Table 4.12, while 5 percent did not complete, they found jobs during the training program and are now off of welfare. Column six indicates 51 percent are currently enrolled at De Anza College and are continuing with their vocational program. In the total program population, only 7 percent as indicated in column six, did not complete their vocational plan and to date have not found jobs.

Nationwide, as of 1990, 40.3 percent of poor persons fifteen years of age and older worked. Moreover, one adult was working in 59.6 percent of all poor families (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991a). The national and De Anza Community College data illustrate that the poor are connected to the labor force. The GAIN participants recognized the value of education as a means for fulfilling personal expectations and as preparation for working to support themselves and their children.

Table 4.4 indicates that 35 percent of the GAIN program population is under the age of twenty-five. This evidence supports the fact that young women do not aspire to being welfare mothers. Many of the program participants have internalized the dreams that define success in our society. These dreams



include the value of the work ethic and autonomy. This is a powerful argument against the view that the poor live in such a separate world that mainstream values and aspirations cannot fully penetrate the boundaries that define the lower-class response to poverty (Kaus, 1986). Moreover, the De Anza Community College research project concluded that 75 percent of the program's total population had been on welfare for three years or less (Table 4.6).

Poverty is to a large degree a product of the job market. Millions of people in the United States, pursuing their own self-interest, work long and hard at the best jobs they can find, yet they end up poor (Riemer, 1988, p, 39). Extensive work effort and experience are characteristics of the poor. The problem is that the hard-working poor do not command wages high enough to assure economic security for an average size family (Schiller, 1984, pp. 64-65). In Santa Clara County, a family's self-sufficiency wage standard for two adults and one preschooler is \$34, 938 per year, given the high cost of living, it is understandable why many welfare recipients are not capable of self sufficiency at entry level wages between \$6-8.00.

Several studies report that AFDC recipients would prefer working to assistance (AuClaire, 1979). Even mothers who have been on welfare for a long time continue to hold a strong work ethic. Work is viewed positively although there is a great deal of insecurity about the ability to achieve success

in the labor market (Goodwin, 1972). In the De Anza College program study, the majority of the participants established vocational goals in hope to secure adequate wages to support their families, unfortunately, due to the overabundance of skilled workers in Silicon Valley, many program participants, once entering the workforce, find themselves at a disadvantaged due to lack of recent work experience.

In the De Anza Community College training program, 88 percent of the participants have either their GED, High-School diploma or equivalency which indicates that they value education and by pursuing a college education they will improve the quality of life not only for themselves but their children as well (Table 4.7). The educational level also reflects the demand for the high level of skills needed for employment in Santa Clara County. In Santa Clara County's highly competitive workforce, a degree may be required to secure a viable wage. There was only one individual on welfare in the De Anza College study who had previously obtained a college degree. This further supports the notion that the local labor market requires higher education, as a prerequisite to career opportunities.

The data also reflects that the majority of program participants, 81 percent, had two or less dependent children (Table 4.5). This figure contradicts the notion that women would rather stay on welfare and have additional children. Many have argued that the monthly AFDC incremental increase, due to an

additional child, is an incentive for welfare mothers to stay home and bear more children (Kaus, 1986). However, only 6 percent of the total program population had four or more children (Table 4.5). Prior employment history for the entire population was less than 38 percent. This may be due to the fact that the majority of women have preschool age children and lack childcare resources. In addition, some may have been apprehensive or reluctant to declare their work history because previous employment may raise doubts about the qualification for future welfare benefits.

#### Welfare Reform Policies

Welfare reform legislation is calling for high work participation rates and time limits on aid. The pressure is going to be on recipients to find work quickly. It will be important for community colleges to establish a close on-going relationship with their county welfare offices to develop creative ways to enable students to stay in college and still meet the work participation requirements. For example, it may be possible for students to participate in work/study, internships, cooperative work experience, or obtain part-time employment through the job placement center as a way of meeting the work participation requirement. There will be a need to expand short-term vocational training programs to help recipients meet their immediate goal of obtaining employment while developing longer-term educational goals they can continue to pursue

once they find employment. Colleges will need to re-evaluate their support services programs to assess whether there should be changes in program eligibility to accommodate the changing needs of welfare recipients attending college. Development of career ladders will be necessary to establish earlier exit points, corresponding to entry-level employment opportunities.

Current welfare reform policies assume that children who are being cared for by their mothers will receive adequate care once their mothers have jobs. However, good child care is expensive. The current expenditures proposed in welfare reform do not take into account the existing responsibility of women's domestic and childcare responsibilities.

There is some evidence for the proposition that the loss of Medicaid is one of the biggest concerns of welfare recipients considering entrance into the paid workforce (Haveman, 1994, p. 12). Under current law, people who leave welfare are entitled to retain transitional Medicaid benefits for a year. If one of the aims of reform is to make paid work more attractive than welfare, further implementation of universal health insurance remains a necessity. Any reform package that aspires to make a significant change along the dimensions of work, family, responsibility, and opportunity will be expensive. In the current economy, it will require a commitment and allocation of resources to expand work opportunities for single parents who may lack marketable skills.

There are important ingredients that must be part of any successful vocational training program. As the data has indicated in the De Anza College GAIN program completion statistics, local industry partnerships between the community colleges and community employers were the building blocks on which vocational programs can be successfully based.

While many women are poor for some of the same reasons that men are poor, much of women's poverty is due to two causes that are basically unique to females. First, women often must provide all or most of the support for their children. Second, women are at a disadvantaged in the labor market (Gordon, 1990, p. 8).

To the extent that the American public has come to value work effort on the part of low-income families, these proposed reforms will certainly accomplish that goal. It does not require a great deal of imagination, however, to see ways by which this wave of welfare reform may leave some poor women and children economically worse off than before. If women are working more, without substantial increase in family income, they are unambiguously worse off by standard economic analysis. To the extent that they have less time and energy for parenting, their children may be worse off as well (Blank, 1994, p. 12).

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Recent welfare reform is based on the idea that AFDC recipients need to be transitioned to work. Work defined as wage labor employment. However, the lack of gender analysis obscures the labor-market sex segregation that makes it difficult for women to get jobs that provide even as good an income as welfare provision. Welfare workfare programs have different meaning and consequences for women, especially mothers, who already do the vast majority of parenting and housework. In our society, parenting and domestic responsibilities associated to women's work, must then be added to whatever wage work they do (Gordon, 1990, p.11).

Since 1967, the statutory expectation for workforce participation by single mothers has steadily expanded. Traditionally, mothers of very young children were exempt. But over time, the definition of a "very young" child has fallen from "under age six" to "under age three" and at state option to "under one."

The transitional aspect of the current AFDC law is embodied in the federal legislation Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training program, JOBS, created by the 1988 Family Support Act. Presently, single mothers and single fathers are required to participate in JOBS when their youngest child turns three years old. At that point, participation is required for up to 20 hours per week. When

that child reaches age 6, required participation may be up to 40 hours per week (Lehman & Danziger, 1996). JOBS was designed to provide training, work experience, and education opportunities for AFDC recipients. The goal of JOBS is to promote self-sufficiency. This transitional aspect of AFDC currently imposes no time limits on its safety-net aspect. Recipients may enter AFDC, enroll in JOBS, find a job, lose that job, return to welfare, and re-enroll in JOBS. It does, however, incorporate the notion of mutual responsibility by which recipients are expected to take advantage of training and work opportunities provided by the government.

Participating in JOBS means agreeing to a reasonable "employability plan" the state devises, as long as the state provides for child care, transportation, and other work-related expenses. However, if the state has not appropriated sufficient funds to provide a JOBS slot (and many states have not), the recipient is not punished for the state's failure. Any recipient who complies with legitimately-imposed JOBS requirements continues to receive a welfare check. Any recipient who fails to comply, without good cause, may be sanctioned by having the monthly grant reduced to reflect a family with one fewer person (Lehman & Danziger, 1996).

Although some states began earlier, all fifty states were required to implement the JOBS program by October 1, 1990 (Lehman & Danziger, 1996). California's version of the JOBS program is Greater Avenues for Independence,

GAIN. California's GAIN legislation, AB 2580 (Chapter 1025) was approved by the Governor Deukmejian on September 26, 1985. The average number of persons participating in GAIN statewide in any given month during 1995 was 78,000. (California Department of Social Services, 1996, p. 32 ). In Santa Clara County during 1994, the monthly waiting list for the GAIN program averaged 15,000 individuals (GAIN Annual Report, 1996). This meant there were 15,000 AFDC recipients waiting for an opportunity to participate in an employment and training program in Santa Clara County. Most individuals on the waiting list were denied participation due to the lack of local childcare resources (GAIN Annual Report, 1996). For a single mother with one child ages 2 to 5 years, weekly childcare rates averaged \$138.45. Assuming the mother was in training for twelve consecutive months, the childcare bill could run approximately \$6636 annually. Therefore, the average annual cost for childcare would run \$13,272. Obviously, Santa Clara County due to the lack of local resources and the high cost of childcare, could not enroll 15,000 welfare recipients who were eagerly anticipating training opportunities.

While the real value of welfare benefits, the quality education and child care resources have been declining, repeated efforts have been made to attach the receipt of benefits to approved social behaviors (Sidel, 1992, p. 214). Furthermore, "workfare" programs continue to support the dependency of women by not acknowledging that work is not the solution for all women,



particularity for women with preschool children. Some women will simply not have the appropriate skills and or education; others may wish to stay at home with their young children. Still others will need support for a period of time to tide them over during periods of crisis. Moreover, some women will be forced to sell their labor. They will sell their labor in service jobs which notoriously are low paid, lack childcare and medical benefits and require long working hours. Many of these jobs include fast-food workers, hospital workers, and office cleaning, where perhaps as a result of the influx of vulnerable women workers, wages and working conditions have deteriorated (Piven, 1991, p. 252).

### Social Policy Reform

According Frances Fox Piven in, "Ideology and the State" (1991), many of the proposed workfare solutions are in fact the very nature and structure of the welfare system and are fundamentally an effort to regulate the political and economic behavior of the poor (p. 259).

Historical evidence suggests that relief arrangements are initiated or expanded during the occasional outbreaks of civil disorder produced by mass unemployment, and then abolished or contracted when political stability is restored. Expansive relief policies are designed to mute civil disorder, and restrictive ones to reinforce worknorms. In other words, relief policies are cyclical-liberal or restrictive depending on theory regulation in the larger society with which government must contend (p. 260).

Due to continued unstable economic conditions since the 1930s, it is not surprising that almost every president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt has promised some sort of reform of the welfare system. During the 1992 Presidential Campaign, Candidate Clinton promised, in Putting People First,

to make "work pay" and to "end welfare as we know it": It's time to honor and reward people who work hard and play by the rules. That means ending welfare as we know it not by punishing the poor or preaching to them, but by empowering Americans to take care of their children and improve their lives. No one who works full-time and has children at home should be poor anymore. No one who can work should be able to stay on welfare forever (Lehman and Danziger, 1996).

Few would deny, Democrats and Republicans alike, that our welfare system, particularly Aid to Families with Dependent Children, needs to be fundamentally restructured. In the United States today, "nobody likes welfare, men and women alike. Conservatives worry that it erodes the work ethic, retards productivity, and rewards the lazy. Liberals view the American welfare system as incomplete, inadequate, and punitive. Poor people, who rely on it, find it degrading, demoralizing, and mean" (Katz, 1990, p. 23). None of these complaints are new; they echo nearly two centuries of criticism.

Governor Wilson in his 1996 executive summary alleges,

Welfare today is no longer a rational system and is widely recognized as being broken. It discourages work, it creates long-term intergenerational dependency, even for able-body adults; it supports out-of-wedlock births, and it contributes to family breakdown by discouraging marriage and the formation of two parent families. These outcomes were never intended. Nevertheless, the welfare system has created a level of dependency

far greater than anticipated by the designers of the system.  
(California Department of Social Services, 1996, p.1 ).

Governor Wilson went on to say,

During the last five years, California has attempted to make some sense out of the welfare system and has instituted a number of major changes designed to reduced dependency and promote personal responsibility. These changes are significant and have moved the system in the right direction, however, they could only be made within the context of the existing and fundamentally flawed federal welfare program (CDSS, 1996, p. 2).

The existing welfare system is not flawed because it discourages work and creates long term dependency but because it does not acknowledge that women are the main workers in the welfare system. Welfare reform has never supported a universal value of self-reliance, especially in economic terms. Instead, it has supported individualism; self reliance for some people primarily men and dependence and reliance on paternalism for others; primarily women (Sapiro, 1990, p. 42). Today, women still perform labor that the current tax system cannot support if living wages prevailed (Gordon, 1990, p. 15). Governor Wilson's solutions to the current welfare system are problematic and deeply gendered. Women find themselves solely responsible for childcare and domestic labor while required to work outside of the home for their welfare entitlement.

California's welfare program over the past two decades has continued to decrease the level of welfare cash benefits it provides to welfare recipients. Inflation has eroded the effective purchasing power of a welfare grant. Yet,

from 1990-1995, California cut its AFDC grants by fifteen percent (Rank, 1995, pg. 57). In 1991, Wilson noted after announcing his proposed nine percent cut in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program,

I am convinced they will be able to pay the rent, but they will have less for a six-pack of beer. I don't begrudge them a six-pack of beer, but it is not an urgent necessity.....What you have in the budget when you cut the AFDC grant, you have prenatal care, you have programs that prevent drug use during pregnancy, you have preschool. You have a lot of things that are more important than a six-pack of beer or providing top dollar to a slumlord (Funicello, 1993, p. 12).

The national trend to cut AFDC grants is in line with reform legislation which would mandate the term limit of cash grants. The current proposed federal welfare reform legislation, Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1995, would limit welfare recipients' grants to two years. After two years, an AFDC parent's obligations would change so that s/he could no longer receive cash assistance in return for caring for his/her own child. There are, however, many possible definitions of what it means to impose a time limit on the receipt of cash assistance. These range from a strict "two years and out" rule in which no cash assistance or any other public support is available, to a "two years and work" rule in which some safety net is still provided to recipients (The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1995). But, the federal legislation fails to provide states with adequate resources for work programs and child care.

The bill also contains provisions which allow states to escape the work requirements the legislation seeks to impose by cutting needy families off welfare instead. Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1995, a block grant allocation process would be established to fund state cash assistance and work programs. Block grant funding, combined with state spending, would fall \$5.5 billion short of what will be needed to fund the work program in 2002 alone (The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1995).

California's Governor Pete Wilson and his Social Services director, Eloise Anderson, released their version of California's welfare reform under a federal block-grant system on February 26, 1996. Premised by the theory that successful reform should help move parents to work, they proposed the two changes. Foremost, if families in which a parent has had any work history in the past ten years the family would lose all cash aid after two years, even if there were no jobs available. Secondly, no education or training to improve qualification and skill levels would be offered to any AFDC recipient.

Currently, California's state unemployment rate centers at 8 percent, this rate includes those individuals who have been unemployed for a prolonged period of time who now are not reported as unemployed due to their longevity of unemployment. The unemployment of 8 percent means that eight or more job seekers may compete for every employment opportunity. The competition will increase the number of people who compete for jobs will inevitably drive down

the wages for those already working at positions further down the economic ladder. If all the welfare parents miraculously found work, wages could drop by 18 percent (Economic Policy Institute, 1995). Despite the limits of the economy, Anderson asserts "that any parents not able to support their children fully by the end of two years will have demonstrated their unfitness as parents, justifying removal of the children and placement in foster care" (McKeever, 1996, p. A11).

The Wilson plan also contains a "fault grant" that would not adjust to meet the needs of children. This is premised upon one of welfare's discredited myths that the incremental aid provided to meet the needs of each additional child causes women to bear children they can't afford. Recent research from New Jersey's "family cap" experiment confirms what voluminous evidence of birth patterns has always shown: Welfare plays no role in the rise of out-of-wedlock births (Lehman & Danziger, 1996).

Not only has local and federal reform legislation premised its solutions on myths, it has not recognized the restructuring of the traditional family. Rising rates of divorce and separation, combined with growing numbers of women who bear children but do not marry, mean that fewer and fewer women are in situations that even outwardly resemble the traditional family. Moreover, even those women who remain within traditional families now confront the possibility, if not the probability, of separation or divorce and the near certainty of a long widowhood (Pearce, 1990).

Most people are aware that the rise in the divorce rate and the increase in the number of children born out of wedlock has increased the number of single-parent families. AFDC's recipients' struggle and sense of desperation is an increasingly common experience among poor, single mothers, part of the feminized poor whose children are increasingly becoming members of a new infantilization-of-poverty trend. Mothers and children continually find themselves standing alone on the margins of democracy (Pearce, 1990).

#### Beyond Gender-Biased Social Policy

The omission of gender analysis distorts the understanding of the welfare state through many levels. Sometimes it obscures the existence of a policy altogether, since the policy is not spelled out at a comprehensive level. Moreover, gender distinctions helped create the meanings of welfare. There has been too little examination of the stigma attached, both for men and women, receiving welfare. Since so many women's major work is taking care of children, it has been harder to define, perhaps, whether AFDC recipients are working or malingering. "Since, their singleness usually involves an appearance of sexual freedom, the sexual double standard is easily exploited to label them immoral. Definitions of respectability have been deeply gendered, and there appears to be some sexual content to taxpayers' hostility to independent women" (Gordon, 1990, p.12).

Even more fundamentally, the current expenditures proposed in welfare reform do not compensate the obligation of women's domestic and childcare responsibilities. Unless the discriminatory gender based wage labor system operating in America changes to acknowledge domestic labor, women's exploitation, oppression, and discrimination will continue.

Contradictory is the rhetoric that welfare represents deplorable "dependence," while women's subordination to husbands is not registered as unseemly. This contradiction should not be surprising since the concept of dependence is an ideological construct that reflects particular mode of production. For example, in traditional societies only men of substantial property were considered independent, and not only women and children but all men who worked for others were considered dependents. Until, the early twentieth century, when wage labor became the norm for men and voting rights were extended to all men, did employed men begin to be "independent." Women, for whom wage labor was not the majority experience until recently, and whose earnings are on average much less than men's, continued to be considered as dependent (Gordon, 1990, p. 9).

Indeed, women's dependence and their unpaid domestic labor contributed to men's independence. Only in the last half-century has the term "dependent" begun to refer specifically to adult recipients of public aid, while women who depend on husbands are no longer labeled as dependents, except of course,



for purposes of the Internal Revenue Service. There is also a class double standard for women: while prosperous women are encouraged to be dependent on their husbands, poor women have been labeled "independent." Public dependence, of course, is paid for by taxes, yet it is interesting that there is no objection to allowing husbands tax exemptions for their dependent wives (Pearce, 1990, p. 24).

In order for social policies to cease supporting the dependency of women, it is necessary for society to cease depending on women as sole caretakers of children and domestic servants. It is necessary not to define women in terms of what has up to now been considered women's unique roles and propensities toward caring. This also requires that we no longer depend on men as men or, in other words, on the man's exclusive role as provider (Sapiro, 1990, p. 49).

Several groups that have historically experienced disproportionate rates of poverty have been lifted out of poverty by postwar economic growth or by the development of targeted social programs. Many workers, who used to label themselves the working poor by themselves and others, are now economically secure enough to be seen as the working class or the middle class. Older Americans, whose poverty frequently occurred because of a health crisis or the lack of housing, and inadequate Social Security have been given Medicare, housing targeted especially for the elderly and broadened, indexed Social

Security benefits. As a result, the overall poverty rate for the elderly is now less than that of the population as a whole (Funciello, 1993, p. 23).

Why have women-maintained households neither not shared in the poverty reducing prosperity nor in the poverty reduction experienced by other high-risk groups? The answer lies in two basic phenomena. First, women's poverty is fundamentally different from that experienced by men, and second, poor women are subjected to programs designed for poor men. Poor women find that these programs are not only inadequate and inappropriate but also lock them and their children into a life of poverty. In 1991, over thirteen million children were born into and lived in poverty (Polakow, 1993).

Furthermore, women may be coerced by welfare requirements into following paths of action that are least conducive to achieving ultimate independence of welfare-by pursuing men instead of their own upward mobility or by accepting low-wage, unskilled, part-time jobs with terrible working conditions instead of holding out for education, good-quality child care, and better jobs.

The gendered design of welfare programs is by no means simply a matter of male policy makers keeping women subordinate. Few scholars have noted the disproportionate influence of women in envisioning, lobbying for, and then administering welfare programs, especially at the state and local levels where most programs are located. Poverty from the viewpoint of women, and a

comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of women's poverty, should be reflected in public policies. However, it cannot be assumed that advocates for women will adequately represent the needs of poor women nor that advocates for the poor will adequately represent the needs of poor women (Gordon, 1990, p. 12).

Women will need to actively participate in the present welfare reform movements. Feminist scholarship needs to continue to discredit the culture of poverty theories so deeply ingrained at every level of government. Women will continue to be victims and remain ultimately invisible until policy makers accept the fact that poverty solutions of the past are no longer viable as the patriarchal structuring of the family and the assumption of women's "natural " dependence upon men is not a biological. Even more fundamentally, lack of gender analysis in federal and local reform obscures the roots of poverty. The lack of gender analysis perpetuates the inequitable distribution and production that create the need for welfare programs in the first place (Gordon, 1990, p. 12). Blindness to gender exists in a sometimes contradictory but nevertheless mutually reinforcing relation to ignorance of the racial bases for the modern welfare state. This is particularly true in the United States, where economy and government have been from the beginning of the state organized around black subordination and the expropriation of Native Americans and Mexicans (Gordon, 1990, p. 13).

Any campaign against women's poverty must proceed from certain fundamental principles, one of them being that gender discrimination is a key element behind the feminization of poverty. Developing and advocating agendas by, for, and with poor women that are built around a recognition of interdependence, the value and importance of women's work to society, and the institutional character of gender discrimination is essential. It is especially crucial in times of attack to have a vision of alternate sets of institutions, programs, and policies that would bring about economic justice for women. With such a vision, it is possible to design a welfare system, that instead of institutionalizing and perpetuating women's poverty, begins the process of dismantling and reversing the feminization of poverty (Gordon, 1990, p. 14).

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